

TARR

The Theatrical Adaptive Role-Playing Rule-Set

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Lead Quick Sheet

Use Practices:

- Roll more dice in Wagers.
- Get information about the world.
- Use weapons marked **Skilled**.
- As collateral.

Use Call Ons:

- Resolve an invocation without making a roll.
- All Collateral.

Use Armor:

- Reduce Mortal Harm to Normal Harm. (up to strength)
- Block Normal Harm. (up to strength)
- Mark Durability to block even more harm.
- As Collateral.

Use Items:

- For a non-stacking +1 die in wagers.
- For their effects in the fiction.
- As Collateral.

Use Arcs:

- For a bonus dice in wagers.
- To get Plot Armor.
- As Collateral.

Spend Plot Armor:

- To block incoming harm 1 for 1.
- To save collateral 1 for 1.

Wager:

→ YOU say what you want.

→ WK says how much collateral.

→ YOU select collateral from: Practices, Call Ons, Armor, Health, Arcs, -1 Forward, Relationship with Character, Give 1 to WK.

→ YOU get bonus dice from: Practices, Other Leading Characters, Open Related Arcs, Relevant Items.

→ YOU roll 1 + bonus dice. And get a 'point' for every 4, 5, or 6.

→ YOU spend 'points' or Plot Armor 1 for 1 to do what you said you want, and/or save collateral.

→ WK says what happens, if some collateral was unsaved.

Upgrades:

Create a Practice+1.

Upgrade a Practice bonus, max +3.

Upgrade a Practice with Call On.

Upgrade Call On to Practice.

The point of this game is to see what happens to a series of compelling characters. These characters are made by the Leads. Other games commonly refer to them as “The Player Characters”.

The Leads and the World Keeper work together to create conflicts for the Leading Characters. Leads, somewhere between one and five of them, create a party, The Party, of Leading Characters. They are the protagonists of the story. The World Keeper, one person, plays everything else, including Supporting Characters, and fills out a world that pushes the characters into pressing situations. There we can see who the Leading Characters really are and who they become.

Playing The Game

The World Keeper, the WK, will describe situations in the world that are imminent, dangerous, important, or otherwise demanding action of the Party. Actions like persuading, deceiving, fighting, posturing, hiding, and whatever else the Party thinks to do. The Leading Characters describe their actions and so the WK develops or resolves it.

On a longer time scale, more happens. In between urgent moments, the Party will get time to pursue their own agendas and characters' lives. The Leading Characters will want things, it's part of their job. And so whenever the wants of the Leading Characters intersect with that of the World Keeper, Leads will make invocations: they'll use stuff on their character sheets to negotiate and gamble with the WK.

If you're playing as a Lead, then you need to read the Lead Book. If you're playing the World Keeper, you need to read both books. Yes, both and all of them.

Invocations

Most tabletop role playing games find reasons to for players to roll dice. In this game, Leads roll dice when they make an Invocation. An invocation is either a Call On or a Wager. These are discussed shortly. They allow the Lead to interact with the world with consistent rules. The WK demands an invocation when a Leading Character does something risky, that carries consequences on failure.

That risk doesn't have to be mortal. It can be; swords and bullets are very effective at making conflict. Invocations cover more than that, though. When a character tries to convince an enemy that they're fighting on the wrong side, that's going to need an invocation. Or when a character decides to try and assemble a trap for the enemy, the WK might demand an invocation when the trap is made, or when it's time to find out if the enemies fall for it.

The Call On

An invocation is either going to be a **Call On** or a **Wager**. A Call On lets you resolve a situation immediately when it is applicable. It does not involve rolling dice. It takes the form: If *some condition*, then *some result*. For this reason, the conditions of Call On(s) are always very specific.

The Wager

On the other hand, a Wager is more general in purpose. When the WK demands an invocation, the Lead chooses what to put up for Collateral. Parts of the Lead Character Sheet that can be used as Collateral are marked as such. The amount of Collateral required is also the danger of the roll.

Then the Lead rolls dice. By default they roll one die, but items, practices, weapons, and arcs may let them roll more. For every 4, 5, or

6 that is rolled, the Lead gets to save 1 piece of Collateral. Everything they don't save is lost, damaged, destroyed, or in some other way goes badly.

Items

An item consists of 3 parts as below:

Whenever or **When** or **Invoke When** some conditions are the case. **Allows** the user to do a particular thing. **Entails** some consequences for use.

Let's break that down 1 part at a time. The first part, "**When or Invoke When** some conditions are the case.", clarifies when the item can be used. It is understood that not all conditions need to be listed. A spear cannot Inflict Stab on a character on the other side of a 1ft concrete wall. This conditional section should be used to disambiguate the cases that are actually unclear. For instance the valid ranges for a particular gun, or that a reinforcements beacon only works while in space: things that would not otherwise be clear.

If it starts with **Invoke When**, that means it needs to be used as part of a wager, with collateral and a dice roll. If it starts with just **When**, that means the item can be used without making a roll of any kind. Finally, some items require no conditions at all. These start with **Whenever**, and don't specify any conditions afterward.

The next part starts with **Allows**. As in "**Allows** the user to do a particular thing". This section says what the item lets the user do which makes it useful. The category typically contains the reason for the items existence, like: "**Allows** you to shoot at or suppress other characters". Items that can deal damage to characters will have the Inflict keyword in this section.

Finally, some items may have consequences for their use. Such consequences are outlined in the section **Entails**. This section may contain other keywords that are outlined later. Things like Replace, or

Reload. If an item needs to recharge after use, inflicts harm to the user, or has other unfortunate side effects, this section is the place to list them.

Armor

Armor has Strength, Durability, and Marks. Strength is the amount of harm it can shrug off at once for you. Durability is the amount of harm beyond what is shrugged off it can block without being destroyed. Marks indicate how much damage the armor has taken. If it has the same number of Marks as Durability, the armor is destroyed. When you use armor to block more harm than its strength, the armor gets marks.

Using Armor to block harm is done after the roll has been made and the wager resolved. “You take a Gunshot and Bleed.” “I have 1 strength armor, so I’ll block the Bleed.” “Okay.” “Actually, can I mark the armor to block the Gunshot too?” “Sure. What does that do to your armor?” “1 mark against 3 Durability.” “Alright, let’s move on.”

When you use Armor as collateral, it is not the same as using armor to block harm. Armor that is put up as collateral is damaged, or lost directly. Putting armor up as collateral means wagering the armor itself, not health behind the armor.

Armor repairs are done fictionally through role-play. Leading Characters with the relevant practices, materials, and time can repair armor. NPCs may be willing and able to do so for money, favors, or threats.

Play Examples

Alex is World Keeper, maintaining a world of medieval weapons and societies, with some futuristic high tech stuff scattered around. Said world has scattered Gothic and Victorian architecture all around, painted in metallic eye-catching colors.

Wes, John, Scarlet, and Clara are Leads playing the Leading Characters Duke Illswyth, Darius Callectear (A Knight), Violet (An archeologist adventurer), and Lady Iris.

The Party is in a market place, expecting a clandestine meeting from an informant from a rival political house. Alex explains *“Snojin does not show up, no one meets you at the agreed spot. What do you do?”* Scarlet invokes a Call On from one of Violet’s Practices, which reads:

The Merchants’ Favor +3: When you ask merchants in your market place for information, any merchant loyal to your house will give you any and only true relevant information that they have.

“I’m going to invoke The Merchant’s Favor.” “The call on, right?” “Yup” “Who do you talk to and what do you ask them?”

“I’m going to ask Neal, is he busy?” “Nope, go and ask him.” “Hey Neal, did you see anything happen to a see young gentleman, probably new around here? Someone was supposed to meet me here.”

Alex responds: “Neal turns to you ‘Oh hey Violet, I haven’t seen anything.’ He turns to his sister, Nia and relays the question to her. ‘Yes, just a few minutes ago, a gentleman bearing no insignia was confronted by some armed men up the street. The guards probably would have intervened, but the whole thing took place very quickly.’ Nia answers.”

“‘That’s what I was looking for, thanks!’ Neal, I’m going relay this to the party and suggest we hurry down the street to see if we can still get to him.” The other Leads agree to do this. As the WK explains that the party find a group of armed thugs

escorting Snojin some ways up the street, and seemingly on the way out of the city.

So the World Keeper described a risky situation: that the party's informant by the party could fall into enemy hands, and fail to deliver information. To deal with this the party could have simply investigated. Maybe they would have asked the right questions to the right people, maybe they would have gotten a good clue. They also could have made a wager. Instead, Violet (Scarlet) invokes a **call on**. It lets her get information from the market place with no die roll. This **generated** a valid clue and lets the party move forward. If a Call On is applicable and can be used in a situation, it succeeds.

Scarlet, as her character Violet runs up the street with the party, has an idea. "Hey, I pull aside the next guard I see and ask them to put the town on alert." Wes, who is playing Duke Illswyth, joins in. "Actually Violet, I have a thought." "Go on." Wes addresses the WK. "Alex, have the town gates closed for the night yet?" And Alex says: "As a matter of fact, they have."

"Violet, I have a question. Since they can't get out the gate, where are they going right now?" Violet and her Lead, Scarlet, pause. "That's a good question." Wes continues "If they're running, they must be going somewhere right? If we show ourselves by catching up to them, we might lose the chance to see where their going." Clara chimes in. "I could track them without tipping them off." The party is **deliberating** what to do.

Alex gives them the space to discuss but also reminds them of the urgency of the situation. "Guys are you having this conversation as you run through the street?" Clara replies. "I think we are. I tell the group to head back and tell the guards to be ready for my signal. I'll track the thugs myself." The party

agrees to this plan and work out a couple details. Alex pushes the time pressure of the situation: “Guys, your quarry is getting away.”

With that, Clara sets off to track them, and the Party move to their agreed positions. Alex applies next real moment of pressure. “Clara, if you fail to track them, the party completely loses both Snojin and his attackers. How do you do this?” Alex hasn’t explicitly said that he’s looking for an invocation, so it’s a bit unclear. Clara says: “I (Iris) climb the nearest building and look over the street, she should be able to pick out a group of people like the one described.” But Alex clarifies: “I’m looking for an Invocation.”

“Ah. I’m going to Call On *Grounds Familiar and Old*.” Clara has invoked one of Iris’s Call On(s). As will be explained later, these Call On(s) are actually created by the WK and Leads. The Call On reads:

Grounds Both Familiar and Old: When you are tracking people through places that you are very intimately familiar with, places you’ve spent a lot of time, you know its layout better than anyone. You can track them with no issue.

“Okay, you know this town very well. How do you track them? What do you know about the town that makes it easy to track others?” Alex is goading Clara to **establish details about the world** through her Call On. “Wait so do I succeed at tracking them?” Clara asks for clarification, and Alex clarifies. “Yes, yes, you succeed. I’m asking you to paint the picture of how Iris tracks people. What does it mean for her to be familiar with a place? What does she pay attention to? How does that help her?”

Clara takes the invitation. “Some of it is obvious. I know where the alley ways are. Other things about it are less so, I know what buildings are owned by people who might help the clandestine-ly inclined. The city is confusing to the uninformed. But the experienced and observant know that there actually just aren’t that many places our enemies could go.”

Alex sees the opportunity to pull more from Clara. “Where do you find them going?” Clara hesitates, unsure how to decide, or even figure out what the possible answers are. Alex helps out. “Is it someone from you know?” Clara takes another moment and says: “OH, can it be Elise? From last session?” Alex is of course, fine with that, but makes sure that Clara realizes the consequences of that. “You realize that might put you and Elise at odds?”

“Yeah that’s fine.” Clara confirms that that’s all good and Alex moves on. “You arrive at Elise’s building, sure enough the men, in unmarked clothing, bearing weapons and escorting Snojin, are just walking in. What do you do?”

So following up on the last situation, which was that the Party figured out what happened to an informant in trouble. Then they took the initiative by deciding to let them run and track where they go. To do the tracking, Lady Iris invoked her **Call On**. Alex used that as an opportunity to ask questions about the fiction. In doing that, he gave some authority of the world to Clara as she played Lady Iris.

Alex continues: “So Iris, you are on a roof overlooking the building?” “Yes, what do I see?” “The group enters the building. Shortly thereafter, they leave again, but Snojin isn’t there and one more guy from the group isn’t accounted for.”

Clara acts without more prompting. “I wait for a few minutes. Where is the group going?” “They seem to be heading toward the main street.” “Cool. If I say now that I’m ready throw a knife, can I get a bonus when I do in the building?” “Sure.”

“I circle the building, what are my options for getting in?” “A single door and 2 windows, one window is open and looks into the front room. The other window, closed, must look into some other room. Do you want to go in the window?”

Clara thinks for a moment. “No, I knock on the front door, and move next to the front window.” Alex raises an eyebrow.

“Okay, you do that. You hear someone’s footsteps walk up to the door and open it. The guy opens the door and looks out-” Clara interrupts. “As he starts opening the front door, I climb in the window and throw a knife into his head.” “Yeah, make an invocation.”

“I don’t have a Call On.” Clara points out. “Then you’re making a wager? You’re about to walk into a melee. 3 Collateral.” 3 Collateral is also the difficulty and risk of the wager. 3 Collateral is a difficult wager. If Clara wanted to back out here, she could. “I’ll put up 1 armor durability, and 2 health.” The WK, at this point, could decide to make 1 or more of the health wagered “mortal”. If they did want to do that, they would have to now. Anyway, to get everything, Clara needs 4 successes from the dice. 1 to get what she wants. 1 to avoid losing her armor. 2 to avoid getting hurt. Her **Item**, *Throwing Knives*, and her **Practice**, *Surprise Knife Strikes*, help her. In total, she can roll 1 die by default, 1 from her question about preparing to throw a knife, and 2 more from those things helping her.

After counting her bonuses from practices, and items, Clara rolls 4 dice: a **3**, a **2**, a **4**, and a **6**. That’s 2 successes, the

4

6

4 and 6, and Alex asks: “What do you save?” “I’m going to kill the guy, and prevent 1 harm.” Clara replies. Alex narrates: “The individual catches sight of you coming through the window and pulls his dagger. You’re experienced enough to avoid getting stabbed as he swings at you, but you still get a deep gash on your arm or waist. You choose.” “Arm, and then I stab him in the face right?” “Yes.” “I have 0|2 armor, so I’ll spend a point of armor durability to block the harm.” “Cool. That brings you to 0|1 armor.”

So here Clara doesn’t have a Call On to use, and as a result she has to expose herself to danger and risk via a **Wager**. Her roll let’s her achieve her goal, but also damages the armor and her character, because those were her collateral for the wager. As Call On(s) are difficult to get, Leads will end up using Wagers a lot. Especially near the beginning of the game.

Lady Iris (Clara), signals the party and they move in. They find out from Snojin that the rival house believes they can rouse the market place peasants into rioting against the town guard tomorrow. The night passes as Alex **elapses time** and says “The night passes and the morning sees a crowd forming in the market. What do you guys do?”

Darius (John) immediately pipes up. “I will go out into the market place and confront this rabble rouser orator of theirs, to expose how silly the whole thing is.” “Uh, okay...” The Party does not seem entirely convinced that this will work, but they agree to support the plan anyway.

Alex explains the stakes before they move on. “Darius, the peasants really are dissatisfied. A lot of them are starving. If you fail, you might have to publicly fight off your benefactor’s

civilians to avoid being burnt at the stake.” “You mean metaphorically?” “No.”

Darius (John) considers. “I’ll still do it. Darius addresses the Duke. Duke Illswyth, in some ways, this whole famine is my fault. I’m going to go out there and try to calm the rioters. If I don’t make it back, it’s been an honor serving you.” *Arcs will be explained later, but John would almost certainly create a plot point for his character right now.* John sends his character into the gathering crowd.

Alex establishes the situation. “People seem angry and riled up.” Darius takes initiative. “I walk into the crowd, what do I hear?”

Alex takes a few moments to have the orator name several of the Leading Characters, blaming them for the famine. This isn’t just setting the scene for the situation that Darius is facing, it’s announcing that this is going to become the rest of the party’s problem if he fails. “What do you do?”

John explains: “I’m going to verbally duel the orator. I’m going to point out the role of the other noble houses in generating the famine. I’m going to accuse him of being a puppet. I’m going to implore the crowd to take up arms and form a militia for us to use. I’ll tell the crowd that we should all go the raiding camp on the hillside and burn it down with the guard.”

John could have said that all in character, but he chose not to. Alex doesn’t force John to try and actually orate. It would be fine if John wanted to, but there are a lot of other things that we don’t require players to do in real life when their characters do them. This one shouldn’t necessarily be different. In any case, Alex says: “I’m going to need an invocation.” “It’s a wager.”

“3 Collateral.” John sighs. “That bad huh? Well I’ll put up my Wealth, Armor, and Health.” “Okay, I’ll accept the Wealth. The health is mortal.” John is surprised. “Wait really?” And Alex explains: “If you fail the 80 people will try to kill you, and if you succeed your opponent might, yes. You can still back out.”

“No, let’s do this.” “Alright.” John rolls a **1**, a **1**, a **3**, and a **5**. His luck is abysmal. “Shit. Alright, I’m going calm the crowds.” Alex recognizes the importance of the scene and clarifies. “Your life is on the line and you can only choose one thing. You’re choosing to calm the crowd?” “Yes.”

“Okay, you successfully redirect the crowd’s anger to the other orator and his situation looks pretty spotty for a minute, but then he pulls out a pistol.” Pistols are rare in that world. “And shoots you in the chest. The crowd is completely stunned. They watch as the man walks over to you and starts pulling your belongings off your body. At least the crowd seems confused and certainly isn’t following the guys who just shot his verbal sparing partner.”

“Darius you are in terrible shape. The puncture wound is oozing blood and you’re in danger of bleeding out in short order. This other guy isn’t trying to hurt you, but he is pulling shit off your body. You could resist.” “I think I’m probably out of it.” “Okay, then I need actions from the party.” Darius isn’t quite dead yet. We’ll revisit that in the chapter on Health and Lead Character Death. What definitely has happened though, is that his character is in dire straights. The rest of the party has to intercept and rescue him. They may or may not get there in time.

Wagers are dangerous. Even if they don’t result in mortal wounds or character death, they make terrible things happen when they go wrong for the Leading Characters. That is of course what makes them fun

and interesting. In another version of those events, both participants could have walked away, and perhaps the Orator would call down a raid or siege. Perhaps the consequences could be the disfavor of some higher noble. In general though, expect that things can go poorly anytime a wager is on the table.

Ownership of the Fiction

There's a notion of The Fiction. The collection of details and story events that the Leads and World Keeper work together to establish. Some parts of the fiction belong to certain players unambiguously.

Supporting Characters, Factions, Cities, Villages, Towns, The Landscape Itself, Villains, and other elements of the World at large fall in the domain of the World Keeper. The Leading Characters, the protagonists, each belong to a Lead. The players who play them. If the Leading Characters never interacted with the world, then this would all be simple. But of course, that would be a different game.

World on Leading Characters

When the World is acting on the Leading Characters, and it often does, it follows the rules laid out for the World Keeper. The World Book explains those rules in detail, delineating how and when the World Keeper can apply pressure to the Leading Characters. These things aren't secrets, everyone is allowed to read those rules, but Leads who especially want to be surprised and who trust their WK may want to avoid reading the World Book. The World Keeper is expected to give the Leads the information necessary for them to make good decisions in the world, if there are good decisions to make.

Leading Characters On World

And on the other hand. The Leading Characters often act on the World. In general, the Leading Characters can do anything as long as

the World Keeper does not ask for an invocation. Even then they can still do those things, they just have to confront risk or danger to their characters. Every so often, it may be the case that a Lead wants their character to do something that the World Keeper judges to be impossible.

In that case, the World Keeper is expected have clear, concise, articulable, and non-secret reasons for this to be the case. By the same token, Leads are expected to play the actions of their characters as being actually justified and possible in the fiction of the World. But inevitably, the WK and one or multiple Leads will eventually disagree about what can or should be done.

In TARR, the World Keeper is not a god. Their word is not final. They are expected to depict a world that the players can buy into and accept. Details of the world and fiction are legitimate when all the Leads and World Keeper accept them as such. To create this consensus, players are expected to explain their viewpoints, offer reasonable alternatives, and be willing to compromise. A Wager of moderate or hard difficulty is sometimes a good compromise. A Wager who's difficulty makes it a fool's errand is not a good compromise.

Leading Characters in Conflict

Then of course, there is the final type of shared ownership. Interaction between Leading Characters. Two Leads may want their characters to fight. One might want an interaction the other does not. When Leading Characters interact, they don't use Call On(s) or Wagers. Every Lead has complete dominion over their Leading Character, with the specific exception of the World Keeper, acting by the rules laid out in the world book.

Outside of that, each Lead has absolute dominion over their Leading Character. Any interaction between Leading Characters can be vetoed unconditionally by either Lead. Here's why.

TARR views the primary objective of each Lead as being the curator or that character's story. Interactions between Leading Characters are contributions to the story of each character. Interactions with the World have Call On(s), Wager(s), and other rules in the World Book to carefully maintain each Lead's autonomy while eventually forcing each Leading Character to confront conflict, risk, and danger.

Generating conflict, risk, and danger for a Lead is a mechanical goal of the Leads. Creating such tension between Leads is different though. TARR deliberately creates only one rule for that space of interaction. It is this:

All interactions between Leading Characters require the approval of all involved Leads.

Mechanically, such interactions that are not approved by both Leads are not possible. This has interesting consequences. For instance, in order for one Leading Character to kill another, one Lead needs to **persuade** the other Lead to let their character die. Likewise for things like arguing, deceiving, flirting, or persuading.

And ultimately, if a Lead's reason for wanting to kill another Lead's character is not compelling enough to persuade the other Lead, it probably isn't worthy of being added to the story of the Campaign being played.

Additional Notes on Collaborative Play

Since the premise of the game is to create emotional scenes with characters the Leads have created, the particular nature of the story and world are very important. The Leads and World Keeper should

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have an understanding about what kinds of things can happen in the world. What kinds of things might the Leading Characters be subjected to? Likewise, the World Keeper may not be all the eager to watch the villain they built get slowly tortured to death by the Leading Characters.

Getting everyone on the same page and in favor of the type of story that they are going to build together is called getting Buy-In. Getting all the players to Buy In to the premise of the Campaign. If everyone at the table wants to play a game that is family friendly, this is less of an issue. Otherwise, the conversation is probably worth having.

TARR maintains that it is the job of all the players to make sure that all the other players are buying in to the campaign that's being run. Players who disagree about what kind of campaign to run, should not play together unless and until they do.

Just to be clear, dealing with people who use the game as a vehicle to treat other people poorly is, in the opinion of the game and author, not a problem to be solved by the game or its rules. **Do not use the World, your Character, or the rules of the game to try and punish people who act shitty to the actual players. Kick people out or leave as appropriate.**

Secrets

It is a recurring topic in Table Top Games that secrets among players can create issues. Because TARR maintains that Leads have veto power over character interactions with other Leads, keeping secrets from your fellow Leads quickly becomes untenable.

“Ha, Ha! I was the villain all along, and now I stab you in the back!” “No you don’t.” “Oh.”

Of course, TARR says you can't keep secrets from other Leads. It says nothing about Leading Characters keeping secrets. It turns out this is really fun:

“Hey, I’m really glad we’re traveling together. I really feel like you have my back since my friend died to The Order.” “I’m glad you feel that way. I really like traveling with you, and just so you know, I do have your back.”

Out of Character: “Hey, you can decide if your character realizes, but my character is lying through their teeth.” “Shit really? Okay, you know if my character realizes, they’ll want to kill you right?” “Yup, that’s the point.” “Well alright then.”

And if, instead the other player had said “I don’t really want to do that, can we not?” the secret would have been a bad idea in the first place.

Keywords

Instead of re-printing rules in multiple places, this game sometimes makes use of keywords. Keywords have specific meaning and rules are all defined here.

Allows: For an item, outlines what the item allows a Character to do with the item, the Lead may select all, one, or none of the options listed. If a **Choose ()** keyword is present, the Lead may select at most one option in the parenthesis.

AP <Harm>: Armor Piercing. Harm that cannot be blocked or canceled by Armor. As in **AP Gunshot**.

Arc: A collection of **Plot Points, Rising** and **Falling**, that **Leads** use to upgrade their **Leading Characters**. Upgrades are applied by resolving all the **Rising Plot Points** in an **Arc**.

Armor: Helps prevent Characters from taking Harm.

Call On: A special ability that can be used in place of a **Wager**, and which requires no roll.

Choose (<option 1, option 2, ... >): In the **Allows** section of an item, indicates that the Lead may only at most one of several options in the parenthesis.

Entails: For an item, outlines things that the item does which are side-effects, or generally undesired consequences.

Falling Plot Point: Plot Point in a Leading Character Arc that resolves one or more previous Rising Plot Points.

Harm: A condition on a Character that brings them closer to death.

Inflict <Harm>: Apply Harm to a Character. As in **Inflict Bleeding**, which applies **Bleeding** to a character.

Invocation (or) **Invoke:** Use a **Call On** or **Wager** to resolve a conflict with danger or risk.

Invoke When: For an item, clarifies that item use must be part of an Invocation, as well as the remainder of the specified requirements.

Lead: The real human person playing a **Leading Character**.

Leading Character: The fictional protagonist party member played by a Lead.

Mortal <Harm> <Time Frame>: Harm that must be treated, or will get worse until the character dies. Specifies the time frame of danger. As in **Mortal Stabbing Minutes**, which means that the Character must be treated within a few minutes or die.

Practice: A **Leading Character**'s skill, which provides +1, +2, or +3 for a **Wager**, and provides a **Call On** when fully upgraded.

Rising Plot Point: A **Plot Point** in a **Leading Character's Arc** that identifies escalating conflict that the Character has a stake in.

(Skilled): With respect to weapon, requires that the **Leading Character** to have a **Practice** that indicates they are trained to use the weapon.

The Fiction: The fictional events, locations, people and other elements of the world established by the interaction of the Leads, through their **Leading Characters**, and by the **World Keeper**, through the **World**.

The Party: All the **Leading Characters** alive in the game.

Wager: A special rule that can be used as an **Invocation**, the **Leading Character** Wagers that they can do something, put up things of value to their character as **Collateral**, and roll dice to decide what happens.

When: For an item: lists the conditions which must be true for an item to be usable. As in: **Close Range**.

Whenever: For an item: explicitly states the item can always be used.

Supporting Character: Character controlled and portrayed by the **World Keeper**. A Non-Player-Character. "NPC" is rarely used in the rules of this game because the game considers the **World Keeper** to be a player.

World Keeper: The particular real human who plays the role of the rest of the World, Characters, Locations, and Conflicts that the **Leading Characters** run into.

World: All elements of the game fiction which are not the **Leading Characters**. The part of the game controlled and portrayed by the **World Keeper**.

Sample Setting Components

No default setting or campaign are provided to play in. It is the expectation and intention that players will generate a story and world as they play. The following are provided to make starting a campaign easier by preventing the World Keeper from having to generate entire lists of items, weapons, and armors to start a campaign. The sample selection treats past, contemporary, and future times.

Items

Weapon Selection

Shiv or Knife

When in reach of completely unready target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds, **Entails** bloody weapon.

Invoke When in reach of target, **Allows** Inflict Stab, **Entails** bloody weapon.

When searched, **Allows** concealing this weapon.

Dagger

When in reach of completely unready target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds, **Entails** bloody weapon.

Invoke When in reach of target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds, **Entails** bloody weapon.

Machete or Bowie Knife

When in reach of unaware target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds, **Entails** bloody weapon.

Invoke When in reach of target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds, **Entails** bloody weapon.

When in reach of thin plant life or wood, **Allows** cut and rend such objects.

Short Sword (Skilled)

When in reach of unaware target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds **or** knock out target), **Entails** bloody weapon.

Invoke When in reach of target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds **or** Inflict Slash and Inflict Bleed **or** Inflict AP Blunt Trauma), **Entails** bloody weapon.

When a target with a shorter range weapon closes with you, **Allows** Inflict Stab, Keep distance, **Entails** bloody weapon.

Long Sword (Skilled)

When in reach of unaware target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds **or** knock out target), **Entails** bloody weapon.

Invoke When in reach of target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds **or** Inflict Slash and Inflict Bleed **or** Inflict AP Blunt Trauma), **Entails** bloody weapon.

When a target with a shorter range weapon closes with you, **Allows** Inflict Stab, Keep distance, **Entails** bloody weapon.

Rapier, a dueling sword (Skilled)

When in reach of unaware target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Mortal Stab Seconds or knock out target), **Entails** bloody weapon.

Invoke When in reach of target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Stab Minutes, **Entails** bloody weapon.

When in reach of target with a heavier weapon, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Stab Minutes, **Entails** bloody weapon.

Throwing Axe

Invoke When close to target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Slash and Inflict Bleeding or Inflict AP Blunt Trauma), **Entails** bloody weapon.

Battle Axe (one handed)

Invoke When in reach of target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Slash and Inflict Bleed or Inflict AP Blunt Trauma), **Entails** bloody weapon.

When in reach of thin plant life or wood, **Allows** cut and rend such objects.

Club or Mace

When in reach of an unaware target, **Allows** knock them out.

Invoke When in reach of a target, **Allows** crushing armor, Inflict Blunt Trauma.

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Baston Fighting Sticks (Skilled)

When in reach of an unaware target, **Allows** knock them out.

When in range of target with heavier weapon, **Allows** disarm target.

When in reach of out of combat target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Blunt Trauma or disarm target).

Invoke When in reach of a target, **Allows** disarm target, Inflict Blunt Trauma.

Flail

Invoke When in reach of a target, **Allows** crushing armor, Inflict Blunt Trauma.

Invoke When in reach of a target using a shield, **Allows** crush armor, Inflict AP Blunt Trauma.

Spear

Invoke When in reach of a target, **Allows** Inflict Stab.

When a target with a shorter range weapon closes with you, **Allows** Inflict Stab, Keep distance, **Entails** bloody weapon.

War Hammer

Invoke When in reach of a target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Blunt Trauma.

When a target with a shorter range weapon closes with you, **Allows** Inflict Blunt Trauma, keep distance.

TARR 28

Halberd

Invoke When in reach of target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Mortal Blunt Trauma or Inflict Slash or Inflict Stab)

When a target with a shorter range weapon closes with you, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Blunt Trauma or Inflict Slash or Inflict Stab), keep distance.

Sling (Skilled)

Invoke When close to target, **Allows** Inflict Blunt Trauma, Inflict Bleeding.

When volleyed in group, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Blunt Trauma on single target, suppress position.

Short Bow

Invoke When close to target, **Allows** Inflict Puncture, Inflict Bleeding.

When volleyed in group, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Puncture on single target, suppress position.

Long Bow (Skilled)

Invoke When close to target, **Allows** Inflict AP Mortal Puncture, Inflict Bleeding.

Invoke When far from target, **Allows** Inflict AP Puncture, Inflict Bleeding.

When volleyed in group, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Puncture on single target, suppress position.

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Crossbow

Invoke When close to target, **Allows** Inflict AP Mortal Puncture, Inflict Bleeding, **Entails** long reload.

Invoke When far from target, **Allows** Inflict AP Puncture, Inflict Bleeding, **Entails** long reload.

When volleyed in large group, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Puncture on single target, suppress position.

Pistol

Invoke When close to target, **Allows** Invoke Puncture, Inflict Bleeding.

Auto-Pistol

Invoke When close to target, **Allows** Invoke Puncture, Inflict Bleeding.

Invoke When close to targets, **Allows** Invoke Puncture, Inflict Bleeding on many targets, **Entails** reload.

SMG

Invoke When close to targets, **Allows** Invoke Mortal Puncture, Inflict Bleeding on many targets.

Smoke Grenade

When in the smoke of the grenade, **Allows** survive inbound gunfire, **Entails** replace.

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Fragmentation Grenade

Invoke When throwing grenade at target or targets, **Allows** Inflict Concussion, Inflict Bleeding, Inflict Shrapnel, **Entails** replace.

Molotov Cocktail

When thrown at target or targets, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Burning Minutes, panic target(s), **Entails** replace.

Flash Grenade

When thrown at target or targets, **Allows** blind, deafen, and panic target(s), **Entails** replace.

Shotgun

Invoke When close to target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Shrapnel Minutes, **Entails** reload.

Invoke When far from target, **Allows** Inflict Shrapnel, **Entails** reload.

Auto-Shotgun

Invoke When close to target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Shrapnel Minutes, **Entails** consume ammo.

Invoke When far from target, **Allows** Inflict Shrapnel, **Entails** consume ammo.

Carbine

Invoke When close to or far from target, **Allows Choose** (Inflict Puncture or Inflict Bleed).

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Assault Rifle

Invoke When close to or far from target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Puncture Minutes, Inflict Bleed, **Entails** consume ammo.

Invoke When close to or far from targets, **Allow** Inflict Puncture, Inflict Bleed on multiple targets, **Entails** consume ammo, reload.

Rifle

Invoke When far from target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Puncture Minutes.

Invoke When Distant to target and time to aim, **Allows** Inflict Puncture.

Sniper Rifle

Invoke When far from target, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Puncture Minutes.

Invoke When Distant to target and time to aim, **Allows** Inflict Mortal Puncture Minutes.

Adventuring Kit

Rations

When you have a few minutes of down time, **Allows** stave off hunger, **Entails** replace.

Tent

When setup, **Allows** shelter from normal wind and rain for 1 or 2.

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Large Tent

When setup, **Allows** shelter from normal wind and rain for 5-6.

Fire Starter

When used with dry tinder, **Allows** ignition of fire.

Perimeter Monitor

When setup with battery, **Allows** notification if anything approaches between 10 and 20 feet of the device for 8 hours, **Entails** replace.

Torch

When lit, **Allows** nearby light, ignite flammable stuff, **Entails** replace.

Jet-pack

Allows flight for 5 to 10 minutes, **Entails** refuel.

Short Range Radio

When distant or closer to another holder, **Allows** discussion with said person.

Portable Phone or Radio

Allows discussion with other holders.

Flares

Allows being noticed or found by anyone far or closer, **Entails** replace.

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Semaphore Set

When sender and receiver have a semaphore set and understand it, **Allows** slow visual communication of long distances.

Information

Orders

When found on a target, **Allows** discover **Choose** (What did target do before? or What was target doing here? or What will/was target going to do next?), **Entails** item is consumed.

Notes of Motivation

When found on target, **Allows** discover Why was target doing what they were? **Entails** item is consumed.

Notes of State of Group

When found on target, **Allows** discover **Choose** (What condition was target in? or What recently happened to target? or What was target's main concern?), **Entails** item is consumed.

Memo

When found on target, **Allows** discover What was the last critical information delivered to target?, **Entails** item is consumed.

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Status Items

Painkillers

When you take painkillers, **Allows** raise your health by 2 points until they wear off, stacks, **Entails** replace.

When you are already on painkillers and take more, **Entails** roll 2d6 -1 for each dose: on a 4-, you overdose and take 1 harm Mortal Overdose Hours.

First Aid Kit

When the kit has uses remaining and there is time to perform treatment, **Allows** remove 1 non-mortal harm, **Entails** replace.

Combat Medic Kit

When the kit has uses remaining and there is time to perform treatment, **Allows Choose** (remove 1 non-mortal harm, change 1 mortal harm to non-mortal), **Entails** replace.

Trauma Kit

When there is time to perform treatment on a character that just died with exactly 1 too many harm, **Allows** remove 1 mortal or non-mortal harm and revive the character, **Entails** replace.

Skulking Shield <Duration>

Allows character to turn invisible until Duration passes, **Entails** replace.

Poison <Duration>

When ingested by character, **Entails** replace, Inflict Mortal Poison Duration.

Armors

Armor allows you to shrug off harm no worse for the wear. All armor has strength and durability. Strength lets a Leading Character block some harm for free. Durability lets a Leading Character block even more harm by damaging and possibly destroying the armor.

The Lead Book

The Lead is a player who controls a Leading Character in the campaign. A Leading Character is a member of The Party, and a protagonist of the Story. Meanwhile, the World Keeper maintains and is everything else, including Supporting Characters.

As the controller of a Protagonist, part of your job is to work together with the other Leads to direct the Story. Using the World created and portrayed by the World Keeper to create an interesting and gripping story is your primary goal. Create a story that is interesting not just to you, but also to the World Keeper and other Leads.

Objectives

Notice that stay alive is not among them, that is a goal at your discretion.

Attach your character to conflicts in the world. The World Keeper can throw everything in the World at you, but it won't be interesting unless you proactively give your character things to be invested in. If your character doesn't care or act on anything that is going on around them, you are probably playing them wrong.

Support and spotlight other Leading Characters. The Leading Characters are going to get the most screen-time of anyone in the story. They are the most important characters. Share the light by using your character to give the other Leads a chance to make their characters stand out or be useful.

Create and pursue wants for your character. Your character should be attached to various conflicts in the world, and they should have goals with respect to those things. Arcs will help you with this and this will help you create arcs, which are explained explained later. Even so, as your character experiences the world they live in, you should be

asking yourself questions: “How do they feel about these things they’re seeing?” “How can I use this to give them motivations that are interesting and which gel with the Party?”

Build on the fiction of the World. When you make decisions about your character, involve them in things, or attach them to conflicts, you are making a statement that you are interested in the nature of those things. If you attach your character to an association: “My character is on the Shadow Government Council.” your World Keeper might ask you questions about the association. “Do they refer to themselves as the Shadow Government Council? ... How did you become a member?”

If you are inspired, do not wait for the World Keeper to ask questions, make suggestions. If you’re not, and you have trouble answering these questions, that’s okay, you can say so. When you are asked these questions though, don’t be afraid to serve your character’s interests. “I was invited onto the Shadow Government Council because I was close friends with a number of the members when I lived in the capitol.”

You need to **Pursue Your Goals**. You are directed to create wants for your character is so that when the WK gives you time to chase those wants, you have something to do. Characters played passively should not expect to complete many arcs on their character. Even more, characters played passively will have a lot of things *happen to* them. In general, this game will reward Characters who take things into their own hands and therefore exercise control over the situation. Such active play will not always work out well, but it will work out well more than passive play.

Participate in the Party. Because you are one of several protagonists, and each Lead has equal claim to the direction of the story, defer to and serve the interests of the Party when in doubt. You need to create a story that the various Leads and World Keeper want

to keep running, so make an effort to collaborate by involving others in the activities of your character, and ‘offering’ your character’s help as you see fit. When needed, ask other Leads what they want out of the game to find common ground.

The Invocation

When the World Keeper thinks that you are directing your character to do something dangerous or risky, they will ask you to make an invocation. An invocation **invokes** either a **Call On** or a **Wager** that resolves an immediate conflict. You may also decide that actually, you don’t want to incur risk as a result of trying to do something. In that case, it’s not too late to abandon the situation and decide that actually, your character is going to avoid doing the risky thing in the first place. Be warned though, risk averse characters are hard to make interesting.

The Call On

A **Call On** resolves the conflict by saying simply, that yes your character can do it. A Call On can be part of a Practice. In that case, it will have a +1, +2, or +3 next to the name. A Call On that is not a practice looks like this:

Perfect Memory: When you witness an event nearby and make note that you witnessed it, your character can always recall what happened correctly.

On the other hand, if this Call On was part of a practice, it would look like this. This is the primary way to get a Call On.

Perfect Memory +3: When you witness an event nearby and make note that you witnessed it, your character can always recall what happened correctly.

Acquire a Call On by:

- Upgrading a Practice that is already upgraded to have a +3 bonus.
- The World Keeper may give you a Call On as they see fit.

So if the World Keeper says: “You guys get up to that set of 5 doors, do you go through one.” and you reply “I go through the one that Alphonse went through earlier.” The World Keeper might reply: “If you choose the wrong door, you’re going to be in trouble, why don’t you make a wager?”

At this point, you could say: “Actually, I have a call on.” “You do?” “Yeah, Perfect Memory, I saw him go through a door.” ... “Oh, so you do. Well you did witness him go through the center door, so you remember that.” “So I don’t need to roll?” “Nope, you just know which door is the right one.”

Wagers

Meanwhile, the **Wager** is a bit more complex. If you can use a Call On instead of a Wager, you want to. When you make a Wager, you put up collateral and state your goal. The collateral is at risk, you might lose it. You roll some dice which gives you points, and then you spend those points to protect the collateral and accomplish the goal of the Wager. You will often have insufficiently many points to do both. You will have to choose.

Here’s how making a Wager works.

1. You state your goal.
2. The World Keeper will tell you the collateral cost.

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3. *At this point, you may back out and decide not to try and do the risky thing.*
4. You select collateral.
5. You will roll the dice. You roll 1 D6, plus a D6 for every bonus you have. Every 4, 5, or 6 gives you a point.
6. You may spend points to accomplish your goal and save collateral, 1 for 1.
7. You may also spend your character's plot armor as if each point of plot armor was a point rolled from a 4, 5, or 6.

You get bonus Dice from:

- Practices, Hide in Shadows +2, would give you 2 bonus dice. All relevant practices count and stack.
- Any other Leading Character, if they are involved in an arc of your character, may give you +1 die for any relevant practices they have if their character assists yours. Stacks.
- Every open, directly relevant arc on your character gives you +1.
- If you're using a directly relevant item, it gives you +1. Doesn't stack.

You can use the following as Collateral:

- Your **health** (if relevant). Multiple times in one wager if you wish.
- Your **armor** (if relevant). If you put up armor, it is damaged or lost as if it's an item. Armor automatically cancels damage, you don't put it up as collateral to do that.

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- Your **items**. If you lose items as collateral, they will be damaged, lost or destroyed.
- **A -1 forward**. If you lose this, you get -1 die on your next wager.
- A relevant **Call On** or **Practice**. If you lose one of these, create a rising plot point on an arc, or make a new arc. You can't use the lost Call On or Practice until the plot point is resolved.
- A relevant **Arc**. If you lose this, the World Keeper will immediately add something to the story that escalates and complicates an arc.
- A relevant **relationship with a Supporting Character**. If you lose this, create a rising plot point about that character on an arc. This will prompt the WK to make the character important. The World Keeper will explain how the relationship changes, probably for the worst. Create a rising plot point.
- Give one to the World Keeper. The WK will create some bad news for you.

So let's walk through an example, the Lead wants to do something: They want to fire a harpoon into a nearby ship, to pull it into boarding distance.

"Matt, I'm going to man the harpoon and pull their ship into boarding range." And our World Keeper, Matt, replies "You're in a battle, they're close enough to see you doing this and will probably try to shoot you." "That's fine." "That's a wager, you want to use the harpoon to pull the other ship closer. You need 3 collateral."

"3 collateral? Isn't that a little much?" "You don't just need to fire it at them, you need to hit the other ship and then operate the weapon to pull them in, the whole time they get pulled in." "OHHH."

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“Do you still want to do this?” “Yeah I do. I’ll put up my 1 armor and a point of health and ... I’ll give you one.” “If you don’t save the armor and you take damage, it won’t cancel it...” “The armor will break and then the harm will go through. It would be bad, I’m doing it anyway.” Adam needs successes from his dice to:

- Accomplish his goal of harpooning the enemy.
- Avoid taking a point of damage.
- Avoid losing his armor.
- Avoid letting the World Keeper do something mean.

Adam figures out his bonus dice:

- +2 dice from **Harpoon Operation +2**
- +1 die from an open arc about the captain of the other ship.
- +1 die from using an item: his Antique Sight.

With 1 + 4 dice to roll, he rolls: a **3**, a **3**, a **1**, a **4**, and a **5**.

“Okay, I’m going to accomplish my goal, and save my armor.” “And that also covers your health since the Armor is okay, that leaves me being devious.” “Correct.” “As you reel them in, they turn and charge at you guys as fast as they can. The ships crash together right under you, and you’re thrown over to their ship, on their deck full of ready fighters.”

The Character Sheet

This section lists the various mechanics that exist directly on your character sheet. It describes each of them, what they’re for, and how to use them.

Health

Your character's health will look like this on the sheet.

5	Bleed, Blunt Trauma
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The number on the left is the number of conditions your character can carry without dying. The box on the right lists all your character's conditions. If your character has a condition marked *Mortal*, then the World Keeper will keep making it worse until you get it treated. For example, if you have *Mortal Bleed*, the WK will periodically give you more *Bleed* conditions until you die.

Arcs

The most important part of your character is their arcs. These 'arcs' are literally story arcs. They document the journey taken by your character, and how that journey changes your character over time. On your character sheet, an arc will look like a list of plot points.

Every **Arc** is made of plot points. Seriously, like a story! And, every plot point is either a **Rising Plot Point** or a **Falling Plot Point**. **Rising Plot Points** complicate things. They escalate the stakes, add danger, or are impending issues that need to be dealt with.

- ▲ 1. the goblins: The goblins burnt my house down when I was away from the village.

This is an example of a rising plot point. The arrow is a fast visual indicator that this is a rising plot point, as opposed to a falling plot point. The 1. is the number of the rising plot point. Rising plot points in an arc are numbered.

Every rising plot point acts on your character and something else in the world. After the number, the plot point says what the plot point is relating to your character. i.e. *the goblins* indicates that this plot point is about the relationship between your character and the goblins.

Finally, every plot point ends with a short description of what happened that is causing conflict. In this example, that would be: *The goblins burnt my house down when I was away from the village.*

Each **Falling Plot Point** represents the resolution of a Rising Plot Point. Any arc that is open can have a Rising Point introduced. A falling plot point may resolve several rising points.

↓ [1] *We slay the leader of the goblin hoard, finally making our home safe from the goblin menace.*

In a falling plot point, the down arrow indicates that this is a falling plot point. The brackets [1] list the rising plot points that this falling plot point results. If this point resolved rising plot points 1 and 2, it would look like [1,2]

The falling plot point ends with a short description of how the conflict was resolved. When your Falling Plot Points resolve every Rising Plot Point, that is, when you have resolved every conflict in an arc, it's time to **End an Arc**.

End an Arc

When you resolving every rising plot point in an arc with falling plot points. Add 1 to “resolved arcs” on your character sheet.

Create a Rising Plot Point

When a situation escalates, a mystery is opened, or things get worse: At your discretion, you may decide that the event is important to the story of your character. If so...

On your **Arc Sheet**, start listing the new plot point by writing down the number of the new plot point.

For the conflict, list the specific thing that the conflict is against. i.e. If you're lost in a forest of spirits that won't stop tormenting you, you would write something like *The Dark Forest of Souls*. It would depend on the setting and the events of the campaign you're playing. The GM will help you on this one.

So far the plot point should look something like:

6. *The Dark Forest of Souls*

Then add a colon and a short description of the situation. In this example, the description might read: *The souls of the forest keeping sneaking up on me, and reminding me how I failed to protect Desra.*

At the end, the new Plot Point will look like this:

▲ 6. *The Dark Forest of Souls: The souls of the forest keeping sneaking up on me, and reminding me how I failed to protect Desra.*

Finally, Add 1 Plot Armor to your character. Don't forget to draw the arrow. And that's a complete Rising Plot Point.

Important notes on the Rising Plot Point

When you choose to create a Rising Plot Point, understand that you are inviting the World Keeper to make it complicated. You're inviting them to make it worse, to keep it going.

In short, when you create a Rising Plot Point, you ask the World Keeper to make the situation that it affects a big deal. Don't get mad when it is difficult to resolve an arc. That's the point.

The World Keeper's goal is to make things worse, repeatedly before they get better. They're going to try and push you into creating multiple Rising Plot Points in a row.

And of course, you get something out of that as well. When you end an arc, if you choose to collect Plot Armor, longer arcs will benefit you much more.

Finally, you may want to pay special attention to conflicts with other player characters. Arcs with conflicts with other player characters are useful for keeping your character relevant.

Create a Falling Plot Point

When you've permanently resolved a Rising Plot Point, create a Falling Plot Point the end it.

On your **Arc Sheet**, inside some brackets, write down the numbers of all of the Rising Plot Points that are resolved.

Write a short description of the how situation was resolved.

So the plot point should look something like:

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[6] I appeased the spirits of the forest by making a sacrifice to them and carving and carrying a Pendant of the Fallen from its bones.

Don't forget to draw the arrow. If this Falling Plot Point resolves the last Rising Plot Point, go to the **End an Arc** move.

Plot Armor

Your character starts with 0 plot armor. Your character gains plot armor by creating Rising Plot Points on their arcs. You can spend your character's plot points during a wager as if they were points gained from rolling dice. In other words, plot armor lets your character avoid the consequences of bad rolls.

You can also spend Plot Armor 1 for 1 at any time to block points of harm. If you spend Plot Armor to block Mortal Harm, it is downgraded to Regular Harm. That Regular Harm can then also be block by spending Plot Armor, if you have enough.

Practice and Call Ons

Practices are your character's domains of competence. A practice is a developed skill and reservoir of knowledge. A valid Practice is sufficiently narrow that any more specificity would seem silly.

Examples of Good and Bad Practices

<i>Highland Song</i> +1 Good	The kind of trade that someone might dedicate their lives to, but that can also be useful in many situations.
<i>Persuasion</i> +1 Bad	Practices like this are tempting because they will be very useful, but they are extremely vague and don't tell us how the character is actually approaching the problem. How do they persuade?
<i>Flagrant Lying</i> +1 ~	Sometimes you'll run into practices that are harder to call. Flagrant Lying is somewhat vague, but unlike Persuasion, still explains what is happening. In addition, a World Keeper might choose to give this some leeway since it is sure to get the Party in trouble.

Usages – Roll Bonus

Each practice grants you some extra d6 on any roll which is clearly relevant to the practice. The bonus stacks.

Every practice is listed as:

Title +1

Where Title is the name of the practice and the +1 is the number of dice it adds to relevant rolls. A Practice's Roll Bonus cannot exceed +3.

Usage – Call On

When a Practice already has gain a +3 Roll Bonus, it may be upgraded only by adding a Call On.

The Call On will only apply when the Practice would normally apply, and will have it's own conditions. Example:

Flagrant Lying+3: When you are interrogated by anyone but the most well trained professionals, tell them one thing that is at least plausible, and they will completely believe you.

Call Ons can also exist on their own. They look like a practice, but without the bonus.

Flagrant Lying: When you are interrogated by anyone but the most well trained professionals, tell them one thing that is at least plausible, and they will completely believe you.

Stand-alone Call Ons can be awarded by the WK they see fit. You may turn them down if you don't like them.

Usages – Context

At any time, you may request, and the World Keeper must provide, any information that your character would know as a result of having substantially taken part in their Practice.

This can be used to get information about the surrounding environment, people, society.

“Where do theives like me hang out in this town?”

“Last you were here, they liked to frequent the Golden Crest Tavern. They liked to move around though. You know, to keep The Man off their back.”

Examples

These examples are provided as fully upgraded Practices, with +3 roll bonus and a Call On. Set the bonus to +1 and remove the Call On to start.

Parkour +3 : When you have no conditions and there is a plausible path to another location within 6 meters (18ft), you get yourself there with no issue.

Read Intentions +3 : When you're talking to a character who clearly wants something and they're hiding it, you can tell what they want.

Explosive Demolition +3 : When you try to kill someone with explosives and they are not expecting to be attacked, you automatically succeed.

Hide +3 : When you are alone in your prepared hiding place and you are discovered, switch hiding places without being noticed just in time.

Highland Song +3 : When in the presence of idle Highlanders, bellow a song to rally them to a task of your choosing. No questions asked.

Clandestine Cleanup +3 : When in the presence of a recently killed person and a bag can be improvised, bag up the cadaver and leave no trace as you bring it to its final resting place.

Death Forest Survival +3 : When days deep in the Forest of Death, and running out of food, use any plant or food, to lay a trap for an animal. When you come back hours later it'll have caught food.

Knife Combat +3 : When in not in combat and next to another character, instantly stab them to death regardless of armor or health.

Prepare

When you declare that your character is preparing for a particular thing, make a note of it. When that thing happens, the Leading Character gets a +1 bonus. At that point the preparation is used. To get the same bonus again, you need to have your character prepare again. A Lead cannot bank more than 1 bonus of preparation at a time.

Items and Weapons

List the Weapons and Items on your character on the sheet. When your character uses a weapon or item in or as part of a wager, take +1 die non-stacking.

Items and Weapons provide guarantees about what your character can do. They can also be used as collateral. See Items earlier in the book.

Armor

Armor cancels harm incoming to your character. Some harm is Armor Piercing(AP). Armor doesn't help you in those cases. Some harm is mortal, meaning it gets worse over time, armor downgrades mortal harm to regular harm. On your sheet, armor looks like this.



This is called “One-Two Armor”. The 1|2 is not a fraction. The first number, in this case the 1, is the amount of harm that the armor cancels at once for free. “At once” means in a single wager, or moment. This first number is the armor’s strength.

The 2 is the durability of the armor. If a Lead takes more harm than the first number, they can elect to damage the armor to cancel more

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harm. 1 damage for 1 harm. If an armor's durability reaches 0 it is destroyed and no longer provides any protection.

The X mark indicates that the Armor has one point of damage. If it had 2 points of damage, it would be marked like so.

1	2	Armor	X
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If this was the case, the Armor would have 2 points of damage. Since it has the same amount of damage as durability, this armor would be destroyed and unusable.

Armor of strength or durability greater than 1 is notable, difficult to find, and difficult to miss. 3|1 is akin to wearing an improvised bomb suit, you will stand out like a sore thumb, and you may not fit through some doorways.

It is the Lead's job to physically describe the armor they wear, and the World Keeper's job to make sure the description is reasonable.

Character Creation

You will need a character sheet, some paper, a pencil, and an eraser.

1. **The Party Premise and the World**

To create a character you will need to know a little a bit about the world and what the party is doing. If you and the other players have not decided the basics of these things, do so now.

2. **Your character starts with 5 Health, 0 Plot Armor, and no conditions.**

3. **Decide your character's place in the world.**

Who does your character know? What do they do? What groups or organizations are they part of? What is their position in those organizations? Collaborate with other Leads and the World Keeper as you go. Keep the answers to these questions in your notes.

4. **Start an arc.**

Since you should now have a premise for the party, you should know why the Leading Characters are together, and what they're trying to accomplish. Create an arc and make a Rising Plot Point that creates personal stake for your character in that party goal. It shouldn't be "I need the party kill the evil wizard." It's better if everyone has a slightly different take. Either of these would be good.

You should ask yourself, what part of the initial goal interests you. The plot point "We need to find out how the wizard was allowed to escape his prison." is very different than "The wizard killed my nephew, and I want revenge for my system and her husband".

5. **Create 4 practices for your character.**

Discuss with the rest of the Party and World Keeper what kind of practices you all may need, or will be useful. Coordinate with the other Leads to get a good distribution of the Practices that you will all need in the Party. For instance, if the Campaign is about a ship crew, the Party should have Practices that are useful in running a ship.

6. Equip your character with armor, items, and weapons that would be appropriate for your character to have.

Traditionally, these games start a Character with a very basic set of tools and abilities. In TARR, you can start with whatever you want. This game holds that when you make your character, you are also making a statement to the World Keeper about what kind of World and Story you want to play with.

This means that if you give yourself a grenade launcher, the World Keeper will understand that to mean weapons of that caliber will oppose your characters.

If you give your character armor, describe it. The more stuff you give your character, the more difficult the game will be.

7. Your World Keeper should be acquainted with your character's situation, but reiterate to the World Keeper how wealthy or not your character is, and what kinds (if any) of valuables they carry with them.

Again, when you create your character, you are also setting the difficulty of the campaign. Keep that in mind.

Running A Character

When you are running your character, there's really a small number of things that you might be doing.

You're dealing with a problem that the WK has presented. People tend to understand this kind of reactive play intuitively. "When you get home, a handgun that is not yours and that you don't recognize is laying on your bed. What do you do?" A Leading Character's reaction might be anything from: "I check all the doors and windows to figure out how someone got in." to "I stop at the door and carefully look around the room. I lock the door again and go over to Ryan's building."

Frequently when the World Keeper presents some issue, but also in other times, **the Party will need to deliberate.** When there is a decision about what to do, or how to do something, the Leads will often need to discuss to brainstorm or otherwise select a strategy to deal with it. These are typically "What should we do?" moments. If they're about what the characters are literally doing in the fiction, the World Keeper may and is within their right, to point out that your characters can't form a game plan in the middle of the melee.

You might be advancing your character's interests. You should be going out of your way to pursue your character's goals. If you have some downtime, and think, "I wanted to learn to read and write." When you have time you might say something like "World Keeper, how should I go learn to read and write?" Better to say would be: "Does this town have a seminary?" "Oh god no." "How about just a church?" "Yeah of course it has a church." "I go to the church."

"You are at the church. It is St. Dorins New Oracle Sect Secular Church." "I find the, priest?" "Yeah a priest, the Church's main room is empty." "I knock on the wall, and call out 'Is there a priest present?'" "Father Dassan walks out from a small room to the side. 'How can I help you?'"

"Can you teach me to read and write, or do you know someone who can?" The World Keeper would probably want you to spend some in game time, days or weeks, learning. But that is okay, you can let time

pass in the game, and other Leads should have similar reasons for wanting to let time elapse.

When you want to do something, you might need to convince your fellow players, Leads and World Keeper, to go along with it. **One way to convince people is to lay in game groundwork.** You lay groundwork by establishing in universe details that agree with what you want to do. In the previous example, the Lead did not ask for someone who could teach them to read.

Instead, they asked about something they were pretty sure the town would have: a church. After it was established that the church was there and a priest was present, then the Lead revealed their true purpose. The critical element is this: the Lead thought about how their character might actually go about finding someone who could teach them to read and then did that.

During all of these other things that you might do, and at other times **you may need to establish details about the world.** When you interact with the world, this game takes that to mean that you want to say something about it. The World Keeper will ask you questions about the world to establish details about it. Even when they don't you can volunteer details that are interesting or convenient to you. Say the World Keeper asks "Have any of you been here before?". "I think I have." is a less helpful answer than "Oh yeah, in fact, I've probably bribed every guard in this city at least once".

Sometimes when you offer details, other players will disagree, that's cool. Talk it out and figure the middle ground where you all like it. Don't use some details you establish to make things other Leads don't like. The World Keeper has final say.

Character Advancement

Character advancement is role-play dependent. If you want to put your character in a shiny new suit of heavy armor, you need to figure out, through role play, how to get that suit of armor onto your character. You could steal it, buy it, trade for it, make it, or anything else if you can get the other Leads and World Keeper to accept. Your character's Health does not increase. Ever. Their conditions of course, can be removed.

When the WK agrees that you have created a fictional justification for it, and you resolve a plot point that is related, you can upgrade your character in the following ways:

- Create a new Practice.
- Upgrade a Practice bonus to a max of +3.
- Upgrade a Practice+3 to have a Call On.
- Upgrade a Call On to be a Practice+1.

Unlike many systems and games, character advancement is not a primary goal of a Lead. In general, characters get less powerful overtime as the game robs them of their health and stuff. The goal of this game is too complete as many Arcs on your character as you can before you lose all your health or retire the character.

Because your health tends to go down over time, the game frequently plays as a race against your health. If you want to be successful in this game, you need your character to get moving.

Death

Characters who repeatedly put themselves in danger or make problems for the World's powerful will die. Because one of your goals is to put your character in interesting and risky situations, you should expect that your character will die. At best, you may be able to retire

your character before the World catches up to them. That, brings us to retirement.

Retirement

At anytime where your character is in a safe and free situation, you may permanently retire them. When a character is retired, all of their open arcs are left unresolved and will still escalate, just without the character. A retired character is safely removed from play. A retired character can be brought back into the game only to replace another dead character of yours. The World Keeper will not kill a retired character in front of you, or off-screen. They're safe unless you actively bring them into your story line. (Not any player bringing them back in, the particular player who played them.) If you visit the character, they are played like any of the World Keeper's other characters. If you pull one of your retired characters into your current character's story, they become fair game, just like any other Supporting Character.

If you bring a character back from retirement to replace a dead character, they come back with 1 more health, up to a max of 5. They also come back with any wealth they have accumulated in the mean time, at the World Keeper's discretion.

Dying

When your Leading Character has a condition for every point of health, they are dying. Roll and sum 2d6. No modifiers. You may choose to simply let them die instead of doing the roll.

On a 10+, they hang on through endurance and strength of will. Remove one condition.

Otherwise, if you have more than 1 Health, you may, if you wish, lower your health by 1 to remove 2 conditions.

If you did not roll a 10+, and you could not, or chose not, to reduce your health, your character meets their end. Create a new character, pull one out of retirement, or pass the torch. If your character survived, add a rising plot point about almost dying, creating a new arc if needed.

Passing the Torch

When your character has died, there may be a Supporting Character that your character knows well, or that knows your character well. With the World Keeper's approval, you can take this Character as your new Leading Character. You and the World Keeper will need to decide exactly what they have, own, and belong to. Create a new arc on this character about the death of your last character. If the new character does not have strong feelings about the death of the last one, you should not be passing the torch to them.

The World Book

If the Leads are actors who play the main characters, then the in being everything else, the World Keeper is kind of the director. Kind of, because the World Keeper does not start with a script or story pre-written. The job of the World Keeper is to keep the world and Leading Characters moving.

As for what happens, this is one of those games that asks you to **play to find out what happens**. Do not walk in with a story. Do not walk in with a lot of world already built. The role that the Leads play in creating the story and world is important, and if you deny it to them, you are not playing TARR.

The World Keeper's Objectives

Here are the World Keeper's objectives.

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1. Create and maintain a provocative world.
2. Fit the world to the Leading Characters.
3. Use the world to ask questions about the Leading Characters.
4. Keep the pressure on the Leading Characters.
5. See each story through to its end.
6. Let the Leads create their Characters' stories.
7. Make things happen off-screen.

Create and maintain a provocative world.

The World that the World Keeper is Keeping needs to be provocative. It drives the plot and it all the Leading Characters have to play off. Maybe the Leads want to contrast to your crazy world, or maybe they want to play into it. In either case, the world that the Leading Characters exist in is busy, dangerous, and interesting.

TARR may not provide a campaign or setting, but it requires that the world that you do create be full of desperation, misfortune, scarcity, schemes, or wicked plots. It doesn't need all those things, but they should be applied liberally as necessary to make sure that the World is always generating conflict for the Leads to interact with.

The Leads should have strong opinions about the situation, characters, events, and locations that you generate and show to them. They should express those opinions through their characters. Give them a lot to work with.

Fit the world to the Leading Characters.

As the Leads play their characters, it is the World Keeper's job to present them with a World large enough that they need to choose what

parts to interact with. TARR holds that when Leads choose to engage with part of the World, they are saying that they are interested in having a role defining that part of the world.

When a Lead takes part in the World that you create, ask them questions about it. Ask them if their character knows anyone from that place or institution. What was their relationship with that person? *Tell the Lead to mark that person in their notes.* Find out whether players have been to places before. Have terrible things happened in the World? *The answer is yes.* Ask the Leads where they were when that thing happened. Did they participate, resist, or hide?

Take note of what parts of the World the players are interested in. Focus and expand the parts they care about, and discard the parts they don't. The World Keeper's goal is to generate events that the Leads find useful in creating their characters' stories. Remind the Leads point blank once or twice, if needed, that when you ask them questions, they should take that as an excuse to add whatever they find interesting or convenient. And of course, when the Leads give you answers, look for consensus with other Leads and give others a chance to create nuance by providing different answers or perspectives.

Inevitably, getting different answers and perspectives about the nature of the world will force you to negotiate some kind of compromise. Preferably, create a way for both players to be right in the experience of their characters. This takes conflict between Leads, and moves to the Leading Characters, where it can be put to narrative purpose.

Use the world to ask questions about the Leading Characters

The Leads rely on you to create a World that they can build Characters in reaction to. Whether the players want to fight other people,

monsters, societies, armies, gods, or ideas, the World Keeper needs to provide that back drop.

The conflict of the game should push the Leads toward Leading Characters that have interesting positions and stances in the world. If the Party is in a town, have the town do something and see how the Party reacts. If the Party is fighting a person, give them information, good or bad about that person.

In any case, whatever the Leads have their characters doing, you should look at it with an inquisitive eye asking: “But what is their angle in this really?” Is saving that village really about saving the village, or is it about the village’s strategic location? Or is it about the character wanting to be a hero?

Don’t feel the need to do this all the time. But it should be on your mind as you build content between sessions.

Keep the pressure on the Leading Characters.

If you are very, very lucky, you will have proactive Leads with full agendas that always seem to get themselves into trouble. More likely though, they’ll need some pressure from the World Keeper to push their characters into conflict.

The World Keeper maintains Narrative Forces, Plot Threads, and imminent Events so that they can pull the Leading Characters into trouble. These and other such mechanisms all have associated rules for their use. In general, these rules reinforce the ideas that the goal of the World Keeper is to push the Leading Characters and put them in danger or risky situations. Not kill them. Killing a Leading Character is the “job” of the Lead who controls them.

Sometimes lulls in the action will seem appropriate. Let the Party deliberate, discuss, and have other forms of down time when the pacing agrees. All the while though, you should be building and

preparing stuff to go wrong on the horizon. Characters need adversity to shine.

See each story through to its end.

As a campaign progresses, many urgent events will occur. Things will happen that demand attention and draw focus away from prior plot points. Take good notes, and dredge up the past when it's time. The difference between a narrative and a sequence of events is that a narrative has cause, effect, and meaning. That is, important stuff needs to come back to the front.

Try to keep plot points in play, even if they're in the background, until the Leads have demonstrated through play, why those points are interesting, what about them is interesting, and what the character does about them. The Leads ultimately decide when Plot Points have been finished. So keep them interested, if they close out a Plot Point prematurely, they don't get to see where it was going to go. The Arc Commentary explains this more.

Keeping stories alive and seeing them through to the end makes the world feel alive, dangerous, and exhaustive. The Leading Characters have to deal with the plot points they've created in order to make them go away. Closing out Plot Arcs also directly benefits the Leading Characters. Which is why to a large extent, enforcing that is the primary purpose of the World Keeper.

Let the Leads create their Characters' stories.

The Leads have a set of mechanics centered around Arcs, that let them define, mechanically, what the story of their character is about. When a Lead creates a Plot Point on their character sheet, they are required relay it to you. You also need to keep track of these.

When a Lead creates a plot point, they are requiring themselves to close that plot point out, which means revisiting the topic. Because of this, a Lead creating a plot point is declaring to you what they want you to throw at their character. If a Lead creates a plot point out of the fact that one of your Supporting Characters was killed then they should run into the killer, even if not right away.

And in this way, the Leads are the main architects of the story. You create situations, events, and conflicts, but the Leads decide which are important and which deserve attention. They decide whether plot points are related and whether they're good or bad. Ultimately, because Leads create Falling Plot Points, which resolve plot points, it is the Leads who decides what it means for an Arc to end. Because they get to decide what is and isn't an ending, they get to decide what the *meaning* of the story is. If they end something before you want, discuss and negotiate. They have the right to end it when they think it is resolved.

Pay close attention to the Plot Points that Leads write. Through the plot points creating, escalating, resolving, closing, and ending, Leads interpret the story of their character to curate it. As a World Keeper, your job is provide things that beg to be interpreted. Don't make them complicated. The Leads will create the complexity by threading simple things together. Just make things that are provocative.

Make Things Happen Off-Screen

Make a habit out of giving your Leads multiple problems to solve at once. If they choose to split the party, have a field day using that to your advantage. If they stay together, then move other things forward in the world. When they get back home, they should hear about how all the other situations that they didn't address have gotten worse. They should feel like choosing which thing to do is a big deal.

World Description

The World Keeper is responsible for keeping track of and maintaining the World. In TARR, Worlds have various components. The WK is given wide latitude for how they build and run their world within some rules.

Narrative Forces

A Narrative Force is a short, general statement describing a source of conflict in the world. These are for your Supporting Characters, and other parts of the world. Leads and Leading Characters don't have to follow them, in fact, they shouldn't see them.

“People are greedy.”

“People stab each other in the back.”

“The peasants are starving.”

“Space is a deadly frontier.”

“The Red Dragon is burning down all the villages.”

Narrative forces are not rules that need to be adhered to all the time. *“People stab each other in the back.”* does not mean that every character that you make needs to betray their friends or the Leading Characters. Instead, it means that when you are looking to create new conflict in the World, one source of that conflict is that *“People stab each other in the back.”*

“There's never enough food.”

“Every group's history is full of fighting, killing, and evil.”

“The good guys are always in over their heads.”

Narrative Forces commit the WK to some ideas about how people in that world behave. The purpose of this is to set a tone, to decide how it generally feels to live in the world that is designed. When creating a Narrative Force, the WK should strongly consider what they want the World to feel like and what kind of World it should be.

To start a World, the World Keeper should create two to three Narrative Forces, that in are line with the kind of game and world that the Party wants. Inevitably, it will seem like some Narrative Forces have become antiquated, or like some more are needed.

To this end, the World Keeper should add, remove, or switch out Narrative Forces between sessions if they feel that it is the direction the world should take. In general, Narrative Forces should stick around for a while. Even so, the WK should quickly remove forces that don't seem to fit, or add ones that seem to have developed on their own or as of result of Party actions and arcs.

When you need to create new items for the Ready List and Event Stack, look to the Narrative Forces.

Detail Tracking

Every world that a WK creates needs to have some amount of detailed information. This information, as in all table-top role-playing games, provides honesty for the WK by committing before hand to the nature of the world. It also provides a reliable environment for the Leads to make decisions in, and creates granular details about the world for the Leads to interact with.

Items

Items, including Weapons, are objects in the World that have rules associated with their use and operation. Weapons are just items that carry the *inflict* keyword. Items have a particular format.

Assault Rifle

Invoke When at close to medium range with a clear shot or through light cover, **Allows** shooting or suppressing targets, **Inflict Mortal Puncture Minutes**.

Fleet Beacon

When relief fleet is ready, but not present, **Allows** calling for the relief fleet.

Ring of Alertness

When worn continuously, **Allows** staying awake for up to 4 contiguous days, **Entails** recharge for 8 days and sleeping for 1 straight day afterward.

Every item has a name, followed by a description. The description takes the form **When** ____, **Allows** ____, **Entails** ____. Individual sections may or may not appear on any individual object.

The **When** section explains when and under what conditions the object can be used. If the **When** section instead starts **Invoke When**, that means that the listed effects must be used as part of a wager. The **Allows** section explains what the object does. This can contain effects that are entirely in the fiction. i.e. *shooting or suppressing targets*. It can also contain effects that are explicitly mechanical. i.e. *inflict 2 gun shot*. Any effect that is explicitly mechanical should be written in italics. (For hand-written objects, said keywords can be underlined instead.) The **Entails** section is where things are listed that are an immediate, unwelcome, side-effect or consequence of use.

Sets of items are provided as default and starting lists for campaigns. World Keepers are encouraged to change, remove, throw out, rewrite, and add to our lists as they see fit.

A Cast List

A simple list of all the characters that the World Keeper has created. For keeping track of all the characters that the World Keeper can make use of who already exist.

Ready List

This list is prepared before sessions with events that are ready to be brought into the story. These events are on the ready list instead of the Event List because they are not imminent. To be clear, the World Keeper is still expected to improvise when the Party decides to go do something unexpected. This list is here so that the WK has a list of thematic content they can bring into the story when appropriate. Each listed event need be nothing more than a short description of the events that will take place, why they present a problem to the Party, and what will happen if the Party does nothing.

And example event on the ready list might look like this:

The Raised Militia

- *Some soldiers are eating great food that is not from rations.*
- *Other soldiers complain.*
- *(stop them) Soldiers get upset, the ones who were stealing the nearby village's food will try to mutiny.*
- *(don't stop them) Soldiers start conducting raids on nearby villages for food/fun/money. The movement starts to lose popular support.*

The Ready List is a list of events just like this example. Notice how this event could be inserted at any point when the Leads are with the

soldiers. The event is 'available' to be used when it is needed, and might never be used.

Events are discussed in more detail in Event Stack.

Plot Threads

Players maintain a journal of Plot Arcs for their characters. This is the WK's version of that. The WK arranges all the plot points of the Leads into Plot Threads. Moving, removing, adding and re-arranging them as necessary. The World Keeper then uses these to create events for the Ready List and Event Stack.

Here is an example of Plot Thread:

PLOT THREAD: Lady Mirabel's Fortune

Illswyth: What happened to Old Lady Mirabel's fortune?

Violet: I have a jeweled ring that bears Old Lady Mirabel's insignia.

Collectar: Violet has a ring of Old Lady Mirabel! Why?

Illswyth: I need some sort of ring to activate the map I just got.

Illswyth: I'm going to find out why Violet had that ring!

Illswyth, Collectar, and Violet: The map leads to a coastal island in orc infested waters!

You keep track of Plot Threads in order to keep track of what parts of the story the Leads are interested in, and what they seem to think of it.

You should be using your plot threads to inform the events you create for the Ready List, and Event Stack.

Event Stack

Finally, the WK keeps a list of events which are imminent. These are almost always direct results of the Leading Character's actions, or follow up to something that was started already. This is a special category because it is reserved for things that are going to happen "whether or not the players are there." as opposed to the ready list which is stuff that "may or may not ever happen." In addition, the event stack is sequenced, the order of events in the stack is the order that they will happen in. In contrast, events in the Ready List can be pulled in any reasonable order. Here's an example of an event in the Event Stack.

The Siege of Ithinal

- Many thousands of troops appear on the horizon around Ithinal.*
- The town is locked down, gates closed, garrison activated.*
- Attempts to negotiate a surrender fail.*
- Siege weapons break the walls open, and a battle between the assaulting forces and the garrison ensue.*
- The garrison falters, and the attacking army floods in looting, killing, and so on...*

An event is a sequence of things that will occur if the Leads don't interfere. The purpose of events are to ensure that when the Leads do nothing, the WK knows what will happen. When the Leads do

interfere as they should, the WK and Leads work together to improve the result using the rules of the game. See Invocations.

With this example, the event would start when and how the Leading Characters are first alerted.

“The town bell starts ringing over and over again. The town starts scattering into their homes.” or “You’re talking to the master of the guard when one of his guards comes in, who launches into describing hundreds of banners on the horizon.”

If the Leads take actions in response that stop or change the following parts of the event, great, roll with it and find out what happens, that’s the point. If they don’t, push forward through the event until they do.

Other World Details

TARR also requires that the World Keeper keep track of other details about the world. The WK needs to track Locations, Factions, Pawns, and Maps. This is so that the Party can rely on some consistency when dealing with things that the WK represents.

Locations are the various places in the world that are relevant or that the party might encounter. They could be a single room, a valley, or an entire country. The granularity is left to the discretion of the WK.

Example:

Gnawing Pits: A group of cultist outlaws gather in these old ruins that were abandoned when great evil beast emerged from the sand beneath and tormented the city. The mix of worshipers and criminals are always looking for their next sacrifice to appease the thing.

A **Faction** is a group of people pursuing a common interest. It’s best if they have opposing goals and motivations and connections to the

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Party. The WK should at least be keeping track of any and all factions that are creating conflict that is going to reach or directly impact the players. Example:

The Pit Gang: Is the group of criminals and cultists living in the Gnawing Pits, who constantly look for many new sacrifices to make to their host monster. They go out on raids if they are running low.

When the WK introduces conflict and trouble to the Leading Characters, they should do so with named, identifiable characters. The **Pawns** List is just the list of characters who can serve that purpose. Example:

Serpent: Mechanic in the Gnawing Pits; willing to repair and fix vehicles in exchange for people to sacrifice.

Mira: Merchant in Gluttown; believes The Gnawing Pit's monster is valuable, and will pay a bounty on it returned (preferably) dead.

Finally, the Party will have need of **maps**, so the World Keeper needs to make them when they are or will be needed. Impromptu maps are fine, as long as they stick around. In order to make reasonable decisions about what's going on and what to do, whether in the case of a battle or a larger long term decision, the players need to know how different parts of the world relate to one another.

The specifics of how these details are represented and used in the world are entirely up to the WK, but they do need to represent and use them.

Optional World Descriptors

The following things are not actually required, but the author of the game finds them useful and recommends their use. In any case, many of these are just good form for Game Mastering in any game.

Session Record

A definitive record of what happened and what the Party did each session. Not only does this give the WK a good idea what happened and a good starting point for planning, it also help the WK remember what happened six sessions ago, to bring it back.

Back Burner

A WK will run into the situation where they have an idea for something that might happen in the future, but it's too early to put it in. A back burner is just of list of stuff that might happen, or things that might be explored later. The author uses a back burner in nearly every campaign to save ideas for later on as a sort of "maybe" list.

Name List

A standard item in any experienced GM or WK's arsenal. A list of names to give to characters as the WK needs to make them. Helps avoid the issue of "Oh god I need to think of a name."

Cast Directory

A list of all the characters, and a short description of who each of them are. Very helpful in campaigns with large numbers of characters. The author integrates this with the name list, by leaving a space next to each name to describe the character the name was used for. As shown:

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Dimitry	Lieutenant commander
Voldstoc	The siege mechanic in the army
Euwan	

Where Dimitry is dead, Voldstoc is a live character, and Euwan is an unused name.

Idea List

A list of brainstormed ideas. In the author's experience, most blindly brainstormed ideas are never used. Many find an idea list helpful though.

Surrounding Fiction

Varying by person, many people write backstories and histories for their worlds. They might write pantheons, stories, or other accounts of things that have happened in the world. TARR makes no requirement to do this, and forbids the WK from pre-planning a story for the Leading Characters. Outside of that, this stuff is fair game for the WK's notes.

The World Keeper Step

Between each session, the World Keeper 'advances' the World. This accomplishes several things:

1. The World reacts to the Leading Characters.
2. The World feels real as its denizens move forward with their own goals and agendas.
3. The World provokes stories with the Leading Characters.

The World Keeper moves the world forward by completing the list below. They don't need to do them in order, and should move back and forth on items on the list as they see fit.

- What is happening in the world?
- Expand Details
- Update Plot Threads
- Maybe Re-examine Narrative Forces
- Update Cast List
- Update Ready List
- Update Event List

So, let's go through those.

World Step: Step by Step

What is happening in the world?

Examine the Factions, Locations, Pawns, and Cast List. Some will pop out as having had important roles in the last session. Others may seem like side effects. If Leading Characters stole from someone, don't hesitate to decide that someone is trying to track them down for the theft. In other cases, Factions or cast members will have clear motivations that demand they take some action in the world. Make note of all these cases. These details will inform the rest of the steps.

Expand on Details

During sessions, Leading Characters will inevitably require the WK to create new information about the world. The WK might create new locations as the Party explores, a faction to inhabit that location, characters for them to meet, and maps to inform their expeditions. Or

battles. In these cases improvisation is fine, but when the session ends and the prep starts, the WK should go through all these things created by improv and add them to the detail lists, providing more distinct details, motives, goals, and objectives. The WK should be thinking about what the Leads need in order to tell the stories their getting into, then they should make those things. In the case of maps, they can usually use a little expansion or clean up. Create new items, Call On's, and so on...

Update Plot Threads

Leads tell you how they see the story of their character by creating new plot points on their character sheet. You create Plot Threads, sequences of tentatively connected plot points. Plot Threads are your opportunity as a WK to draw connections between Plot Point of different Leading Characters and different Plot Arcs.

When a Lead creates a plot point, they're telling you that the event in the plot point was important, that it relates to any plot points that have come before, and that they, the Lead, are interested in developing that story more. When you create provocative events, Leads have the opportunity to rule definitely about how their plot arcs and your plot threads should be interpreted. **This is one of your goals.** In the meantime, discuss the story and world with the Leads directly to make sure it's going in a direction that they support.

As you create new events in response to the plot threads you lay out, you should be asking yourself how the Leads see the plot. What do they think the story is about? Do they think it's about this idea, or about that subtly different idea? You arrange plot threads to expose these questions. For instance, are 2 plot points by different Leads connected? As you create events for the event stack later, one goal is to create events that ask players to answer the questions you find while building plot threads.

Maybe Examine Narrative Forces

Every so often you should look at your Narrative Forces and ask whether they still fit. Is the campaign moving in a different direction? What should they be? And then add, remove, and change them as you see fit. Take special care when doing this. Rapidly swapping out Narrative Forces will make a world that is non-committal to any themes.

Update Cast List

Add any characters who were created in the last session.

Update Ready List

Look through any unused events from last time and remove any that are obsolete. Then look at the stuff you came up with in **What is happening in the world?** Use these notes to add items to the ready list that are not imminent. A character determined to attack another character in response to an event that just happened in the last session, should probably be added to the event list. A character who is considering attacking another, but could do it in any of the next 5 session, and might not do it at all, should be added to the Ready List.

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That merchant, Miles, he's going to realize that the ring was stolen from him.

- The party sees that he put a bounty out in the market place.
- He asks the party and others if anyone has seen the ring.
- If the party has flaunted to ring to use it's effect, Miles will later find and confront them with a gang of thugs.

Update Event List

The event list is a special list of events which are absolutely imminent: pending attacks, confrontations, and so on, which are direct results of the actions of the party. These are best made by consulting a Session Record and asking, what are the immediate consequences, or what has been a long time coming? Especially early in the game, the event list may be empty, and that's fine.

Now that Duke Illswyth killed his lieutenant in anger, someone from his family will come looking for Lieutenant Palewyre.

- "Duke Illswyth, the talk of the town is that the entire market place saw you shoot your lieutenant. What am I supposed to tell the poor lad's family?"
- The local Lord summons, by arrest if needed, the Duke to explain his actions.
- House Palewyre accuses him of murder, and demands his execution in front of the court.

World Setup

Because Leading Characters have a defining role in TARR campaigns, their role in creating the campaign is important. The World Keeper creates a world around the Characters that the Leads create. The objective of the World Keeper is to create a World that complements and highlights the Characters created by the Leads. That means that the World needs to be fleshed out in tandem with the Leading Characters. Therefore, understand that World Setup is not a one time thing and that it will take more than one session.

In fact, **world setup will take place over a number of sessions.** The World Step will naturally expand and expound on the world as sessions continue. But of course, it has to start somewhere.

Start with a couple of Narrative Forces, preferably after discussing what kind of campaign and themes the Leads are interested in playing. Each of these Narrative Forces should contribute to the overall themes and ideas of the campaign.

With the Narrative Forces in place, **create some items for the Ready List that introduce and illustrate the Narrative Forces.** When the Leads look to you during the first session, they might have already created circumstances that you know how to run and play out. If that happens, great! If that's not the case, when they look to you, you'll lean on these events you build to start establishing the stakes and themes.

Optionally, **many World Keepers find it helpful to have a list of ideas**, to assist with on the spot improv. Other World Keepers prefer to go in as a blank slate, ready pull whatever they can from the players, and turn it into the remainder of the content and conflict. Whichever matches closest to your style, be it the first, second, or something in between, that's fine.

In the same vein, **many World Keepers find it helpful to have some World Details established ahead of time.** Some preexisting

locations, people, or historical events can help WKs get a foothold on a new campaign. These considerations are left to the discretion of the WK.

Running Sessions

While running sessions, the World Keeper's most important duty is to control the pacing of the campaign. They need to transition scenes at the right time, give Leads space when needed, and drop events that demand responses at the right moments. Scenes operate in just a few different ways.

A scene can create space for Lead Agendas. Give Leads space to play their characters and to let Leading Characters interact with one another. If a Lead wants their character to go out and proactively generate conflict, let them do so. When Leads want time to pursue their own goals, give it to them.

A scene can illustrate what the world is like. Ask questions and frame scenes to make Leads think about how their Characters live. Create time for Leading Characters to live in their lives. What are their lives like? Who do they talk to regularly? These scenes ground characters, and encourage the Leads to think about their characters like real people.

A scene can discuss the fiction. Instead of establishing details of the Leading Character's lives directly, this is a discussion that establishes details about the world that affect the characters. "Have any of you been here before?" "What do you know about this secret society? Is it true?" These scenes give Leads a chance to weigh in on the kind of world that they are interested in role playing in.

More importantly, such scenes give the Leads information about the world and set expectations. It is very important that the information about locations, factions, and characters, that is established in these scenes is respected. Leading Characters rely on it to make their

decisions, and if they receive bad information they will inevitably make bad choices based on information that they believed was reliable. In that sense, the World Keeper is responsible for not just delivering information to the Party, but also for making clear the reliability of such information.

Finally, a scene can host an event created by the World Keeper.

These events are pulled directly from the Ready List or Event Stack. These scenes are here primarily to push hard into conflict. They are likely to occur once or twice per session, because they should always generate a situation that requires immediate attention, deliberation, or combat. “Your lieutenant informs you that Gregory is dead in his chamber, and there’s a note promising more killing soon. What do you do?” Overwhelmingly, these scenes create an immediate problem that the Party must deal with.

So these are the things that the World Keeper does in a session. They **create time for Lead Agendas**, they **let the Leading Characters live in the World**, they **discuss the fiction of the World**, and they **present urgent situations for the Party to deal with**. Go out of your way to create scenes of different purposes.

Running the First Session

Running the first session of a campaign is different than running the rest. Part of the session will be spent establishing details about the campaign. The Party together with the World Keeper need to establish some common starting points. Create characters together, during the first session.

The Premise of the Party should be decided during, or soon after the end of character creation. The Party Premise is the reason that the Leading Characters are together. The various Leading Characters do not need to be friends, but they are not enemies and they are working together toward something. It should be decided before anyone starts

role-playing why the Party is together, what their goal together is, and why the Leading Characters are each joining in that effort. The World Keeper should at least require that the Party have a premise before moving forward.

The Leads will need your help in character creation. As so much of the character creation process is left to the creativity of Leads, the World Keeper is responsible for giving the OK on many portions of their character.

The World Keeper has veto power over Practices, Weapons, Items, Armor, and Wealth. Interestingly, the World Keeper does not have veto power over other fictional elements of the characters.

Leads may, for instance, create royalty with entire countries at their disposal if they wish. Leads have wide latitude to create Leading Characters in whatever fictional circumstances they want, provided they have the correct number of valid Practices, Items, Weapons, and so on. The role of the World Keeper, in this part of the process, is to communicate this critical piece of information to the Leads: whatever fictional context the Leads give themselves, you will interpret the game to *about* those things.

If a Lead starts in charge of a secret society, they are saying that they want the game to be *about* running a secret society. It is the job of the World Keeper to explain this to the Leads.

If the Leads take no initiative in generating the conflict of the game through their characters, you will need to pull it out of them. This will be common and likely. The World Keeper does this by asking questions. Ask the Leading Characters, not the Leads, if they belong to organizations. Ask them what they think of a recent event you made up. Ask the Leading Character which important people they know.

Once you've established some of those connections, turn them back on the players and ask more questions. If the archi-typical thief

character belongs to a thieves guild, ask them about their last botched job. If a character is a hacker, ask them which of their hacker friends recently betrayed them. Use questions like these to create exposure for the new characters. Where are they vulnerable? The interesting story lies that way?

Sometimes players will not like these situations you've created for them. "Hold on, my assistant did not betray me!" This is actually fine, because it creates strong feelings about a situation from the Lead. Sometimes the reaction will be more subdued, read the facial expressions of the Leads as you do this. Look for more agreeable ground when there are people who are not enthused about an idea. Throw said ideas out and find related ones that are more agreeable. "Oh, okay, who did betray you? ... Or maybe no one betrayed you, what is the big problem on your character's mind?" Give Leads time to consider.

While you do this, look to the other players to see their reactions. As you pull these details from the players. Connect them together. When you see negative reactions from other players, get their input. "Marcus, why is the thieves guild after you?" "I think the thieves guild just likes to eliminate outsiders who know too much." "Is that true Dan, does the thieves guild try to silence those who know too much?" "I think it's probably a small subset of the thieves guild that does that. Some of us think it's bad for business." "Cool, what did you do when you found out they got permission from the elder to go after Marcus?"

When play starts, ask the Leading Characters to describe what their lives are like right now. What are their days like? How do they live? Ground the characters in the world to establish a status quo to operate on.

Create toy problems to demonstrate the world and system. Especially if the Players, World Keeper included, are new, create some simple scenarios to get used to role-playing in the system.

Give the Leading Characters opportunities to use their abilities. Get them into a fight. Demonstrate the themes and basics of the world.

The Wager

The Wager is the centerpiece of the system, and as such, it needs some discussion. The core of the Wager and the entire game is this: A Lead wants their Leading Character to do something, and you, the World Keeper, want to create narrative tension. Because this game believes religiously in letting Leads control their Characters, most of the time the Leads will decide themselves what happens when they fail.

They decide what the consequences of their failures are by selecting what items of collateral they want to put at risk. The World Keeper needs to decide how much collateral they need to put up, there's a discussion about that in *Discretion*.

Sometimes when they put up Collateral up, they'll need your help. If they put their health, then you'll need to decide what kind of damage is inflicted if they lose it. If they ask you to complicate an arc, the new plot point will not be "I failed to do ...". It should be something along the lines of "The guy you were trying to rescue in this raid isn't even here." or "The killer's next target is..."

From your perspective, escalating an arc is actually the same as "Give 1 to the World Keeper." They're giving you a chance to throw a wrench at them. So take it. Separate the party, reveal things they'd rather weren't true, and otherwise cause havoc.

Finally, A Lead might pitch you their own negative consequence. In general accept these if your reaction is "Oh, that's freaking great!" with a wry smile.

Demand invocations only when there are clear and imminent consequences for failing. In the traditions of Dungeons & Dragons and Pathfinder, there is an expression "Taking a 20". It refers to situations where the player has no pressure, or enough time that trying

a roll over and over, they would eventually succeed. So instead of doing all those rolls, the GM and player agree to “Take a 20” to avoid the monotony.

This never occurs in TARR. There is no “Taking a 20” in the system. If there are no stakes attached to the invocation, just give the fictional effect to the Leading Character.

Discretion

Even with all the rules and guidelines about what the World Keeper, ultimately many things will just be “The World Keeper’s call” with no further rule attached. This section is not rules. It is a statement of intent, to let the WK know what that WK discretion is intended to look like.

Demand small amounts of collateral. Here’s a handy chart:

Collateral Demand	Successes Required	Dice needed for >50% to lose nothing
1	2	4
2	3	6
3	4	8
4	5	10
5	6	12
6	7	14

If you demand 1 collateral for a wager, the Lead will want to roll 2 successes, 1 to accomplish their goal, and 1 to save the collateral. The true difficulty is always 1 plus the collateral you ask. To get everything they want and lose nothing most of the time, Leads need to roll about 2 times the difficulty in dice.

Always balance the difficulty of a Wager against the actual difficulty of the thing they’re trying to do. Wagers are difficult because the

Leading Character is trying to do something difficult, independent of the skills and abilities of the Leading Character.

1 and 2 should be considered easy rolls. 3 and 4 are a bigger deal. Even with large numbers of dice to roll, the Lead may still lose collateral on easy rolls. 5 and 6 are exceptionally difficult and should be used with great care.

Make a roll more difficult when: There are multiple sources of risk or danger. The risk or danger was announced ahead of time, is important to the world, or has been prepared with intent.

Be generous by playing the long game. As the Keeper of the World, and its fiction, and locations, and factions, and characters, you have an abundance of tools. You can jam guns, destroy buildings, kill allies, and otherwise create conflict that is forever outside whatever the Leading Characters have set themselves up to be good at dealing with.

Therefore, err on the side of giving Leads just a bit too much. The World Keeper has immense ability to change the context of the Party with no visibility to them. For instance, suppose a Leading Character has a grenade launcher that makes it a bit difficult to create difficult combat encounters. Creativity of the World Keeper, by examining the fiction of the world, can quickly create interesting counterpoints to that problem. Enemies can take hostages, or attack at range. The World Keeper has the ability choose the time, scale, and angle of attack for every conflict. They should be making use of that anyway. Give that Leading Character their moment with the grenade launcher, and then demand more from them.

The Leading Characters should feel like powerful, capable people who might fail because the world is just that dangerous and the stakes really are that high. They should not feel helpless at the mercy of a WK grinding them into dust.

Understand what you are teaching the players. If everyone that a player talks to dies, they will stop talking to people. Be mindful of any

situation that discourages Leading Characters from doing interesting things.

When mistakes are made, **make revisions honestly** and if possible, allow mistakes in favor of the Leads to stand. If you have a character do something that doesn't make sense, no matter who points it out, it's fine, admit an error, correct it, and move on. Leads rely on you in these situations not to put their characters in worse situations as a result of an error. In general, you should revise in favor of the Leading Characters. Even so sometimes you have to say "Wait, did I say the guard you killed had a communicator? I'm sorry I mis-read my notes, he does not. If you want to change your actions now that you don't have a communicator, that's cool."

Because you need Leads to trust you not to screw them, and they rely on you for information, **err on the side of giving information**. Do this even if it gives the game away. Leads that have their characters respond to events in the world inappropriately because they lacked the necessary information to make the right decision will be upset.

As the World Keeper you have all the information. Therefore you will almost always have a better understanding of the situation than the Leads do. It is overwhelmingly likely, that most mistakes in this category will be on the side of too little information.

Disclaim responsibility to the mechanisms of the game in critical moments. If everything goes right, you will run into situations that call on you to make a critical decision in a critical time. It may feel inappropriate to just *decide* what happens. When that occurs, you have some options:

- Give the decision to your supporting characters by having them follow their motivations.
- Use your notes, and follow through with the decisions about the world you've already made.

- Give the decision to the dice, and demand an invocation.
- Start the thing into the process of happening, and make a note to develop into a detailed event during the next prep step.

Leading Character Mechanics

When a Lead makes an invocation, they'll make use of the various notes on their character sheet and the rule and mechanics that those imply. This section discusses the various concerns and responsibilities of the World Keeper.

Practices and Call Ons

When ruling on the legality of a practice or Call On, first make sure that it tells us about who the character is and how they do things. Then make sure that it is specific enough to be within reason. A good practice or call on tells us how a character does something.

Melee Take Downs

Good because it tells us that the character prefers to fight by moving their opponent to the ground. This would for instance not help the Leading Character very much in a friendly fist fight.

Read Dishonesty

Good because it tells us that the character is good at recognizing when people are lying to them. "Read" implies that this is done entirely through reading facial expressions and intonation.

Friendly with Soldiers

Good because instead of "Command Troops", this tells us why the character might be effective as a commander: the troops would like them.

Persuasion

No Good because it doesn't tell us anything about how or why the character is persuasive. It is also a very broad ability.

Sword Fighting

Very iffy, how do they fight with swords? Do they disarm people? Are they cautious or aggressive in style? What is it like for that character to sword fight?

Sneaking

No Good because, again, it doesn't tell us how or why the character is good at sneaking. Also overly broad.

Bluffing

No Good for the same reasons.

Look Like You Belong

Good, tells us what the character does: they have a knack for figuring out how to make people accept their presence when not looking too closely. Also tells us what kind of conditions it works under.

A Practice, once upgraded to +3, can be improved only by adding a Call On. A resolves an invocation with no roll, simply allowing the Leading Character to proceed as they intend, provided the circumstance is within the situation described by the Call On. The required circumstances of a Call On should be specific enough that they require specific 'maneuvering' by the Leading Character to create them. Call On's are structured as When <condition>, <effect>.

These examples have a tendency to introduce chaos, and you should prefer that as the WK.

Melee Take Downs +3: When a close character is unaware of your presence and you are unseen, you get a single perfectly accurate hit on them with any melee weapon.

Read Dishonesty +3: When you already know the truth behind a lie being told to you, you can intuit the motive of the lie.

Friendly with Soldiers +3: When you are subordinate to a superior officer and your unit is taking anything beyond minor losses, you can rally the men to mutiny with you.

Look Like You Belong +3: When you are somewhere you shouldn't be, those around are not yet alerted, and you are confronted, you may kill the person confronting you.

A Practice with out a Call On looks like this:

Look Like You Belong +3

A Call On without a Practice looks like this:

Look Like You Belong: When you are somewhere you shouldn't be, those around are not yet alerted, and you are confronted, you may kill the person confronting you.

When a Lead improves a Leading Character, they can do any of the following with regard to Practices and Call Ons:

- Create a Practice.
- Upgrade a Practice by giving it a Call On.
- Upgrade a Call On by turning it into a practice +1.

A Lead cannot create a Call On from nothing. They must add them to practices. Stand alone Call Ons are awarded by the World Keeper as they see fit.

Prepare

When a Lead declares that their character is preparing for a particular thing, make a note of it. When that thing happens, the Leading

Character gets a +1 bonus. At that point the preparation is used. To get the same bonus again, the Lead needs to have their character prepare again. A Lead cannot bank more than 1 bonus of preparation at a time.

Items

The World Keeper will want to create their own items to put into the world. The World Keeper has free reign to make whatever items they want to add to the world. This section is the guide for doing so.

The conditions section of an item, the part that starts **Whenever** or **Invoke When**, or just **When**, has two jobs. The first and more important job is remove ambiguity about when it can be used. The second job is to rule out forms of obvious abuse.

For items that are weapons, the range requirements should be explicitly stated. Like so: **Invoke When in melee range**. If the weapon uses ammo, the weapon should **Entail** ammo use. This implies that it can only be used when the character has ammo. It does not need to be listed in both places.

Sometimes items are intended for use in certain situations, but don't need to be. A torch was probably meant to be used in the dark, but the **When** section for a torch probably should not say **When dark**, because that imply that the torch could only be lit in the dark. What if the Party wants to burn something down in the daytime?

Item descriptions should be as brief as is practical. An item with very restricted use cases will not just be rarely used, it will also be a pain to read!

The **Allows** section is very straight forward, it contains the various primary effects of the item. As so: **Allows illuminate darkness, set fire to combustibles**. It is important to capture both the fictional and mechanical capacities of an item in the **Allows** section. While a World Keeper may allow an item to be used in an unexpected way, Leads cannot rely on that. The World Keeper should be careful to guarantee

behavior that they want the item to have. In other cases of ‘creativity’ by the Leads, the World Keeper should be generous, allowing the Leads to do things which seem reasonable.

Reasons to hesitate about when to use the item go in the **Entails** section. This section is sort of a “cost” section. What is the cost of using the item? It might be that it inflicts harm on the user, like so: ***Entails Inflict Blood Loss***. In all these sections, use keywords when they are applicable.

Health

Healing, or removing conditions, should occur over in game time. It can be done quickly if it is difficult. Getting into combat should be an important decision for the Leads. Make the world dangerous and unforgiving enough that Leads want to create Plot Points for moments when they take Harm.

When a character has a lot of Harm, you will have to make a decision something like this: “If I have this guy target Duke Illswyth, Illswyth might die. Should I do it?” In this moment, remember. In TARR, you are playing to find out what happens. Think about what your characters would do, think about the situation. What does the world that you have built demand? Entrust the decision to your characters, to the world, and to the world.

That said, do your best to help Leads understand when they are making a potentially lethal decision, and give them the chance to back out if they don’t think it’s the time or place for the Leading Character’s last stand. Of course, make sure there are consequences for backing out!

Armor

Since the use and effectiveness of Armor is almost entirely covered by rules and the discretion of the Leads, the World Keeper decides how Armor is acquired, maintained, portrayed, reacted to, and bypassed.

When Harm is taken by a leading character, their armor mitigates. First the Harm is reduced by the armor's strength. Then if the Lead wants to, they can further reduce the incoming harm by up to the armor's durability. When they do this, they add a mark to the armor for every point of harm blocked. If the armor has a mark for every point of durability, it is destroyed. **This is all done without putting up armor as collateral.**

Putting up armor as collateral does not cause it to block harm. Rather, it directly risks the armor itself. When armor is lost as collateral, it is lost, dropped, marked, or destroyed.

When a Leading Character or a World Character has Armor, the World Keeper should push to establish what the Armor looks like, what form it takes, how it affects, and what it implies about the character. In particular, it should be very difficult to hide while wearing heavy armor. It should be difficult to even carry heavy armor without wearing it. Everyone in the world should have a reaction to the various types of Armor that they see around them.

Likewise, Armor acquisition can raise suspicion, it can be difficult or expensive. The various towns and settlements in the world might have rules about who is allowed to wear what forms of Armor. (If you do this, make sure you don't surprise the players with this.) These are decisions for the World Keeper to make and portray to the Leads.

Some harm is **Armor Piercing**, meaning that it simply cannot be canceled by Armor. This type of Harm should be used sparingly and with warning: "You guys find Terry shot dead on the path to the hide-out, he has a large hole blown clean through both him and his armor. You keep going?"

Arcs

The Leading Characters fill out Arcs with plot points. The Leads have complete autonomy as to what they think is and isn't a plot point for

their character. To that end part of the World Keeper's job is to elongate each Leading Character's arcs by creating situations that the Leads believe are Rising Plot Points. Such a job is hit and miss, sometimes it will work, and sometimes it won't. When it doesn't work, that's fine, just keep it moving along toward the next set of conflicts.

As the Leads create Plot Points, the World Keeper can insist on the type of Plot Point it is. For instance, say that the Party just destroyed a camp of goblins near the family of a Leading Character. That Lead might believe that since the goblins are defeated, that that is a Falling Plot Point, and that the arc is coming to a close.

Hopefully the World Keeper did a good job of making sure the relevant Rising Plot Points are specific enough to say whether the arc is about say: the goblins being defeated, or the family being safe. Also, hopefully if the goblins are not the only threat in the area, the World Keeper indicated that organically during Role-Play. As in: "As you guys raid the camp, you find maps, notes, and gold that they clearly didn't get from the village they were raiding. The notes make it clear that they were taking orders from someone out East. What do you do?"

When it become ambiguous anyway, you'll just have to say something like this: "Hey James, before you write that Plot Point, is that Arc about protecting the family or defeating the goblin leader?"

"Definitely about protecting the family." "I should tell you then that the family is still in danger. You probably don't want to resolve that Arc yet. In fact, maybe your character's intuition is even telling them that there is still danger. Like they can just feel it. Maybe it keeps them awake at night?" "Oh. Okay, is that connected to the notes that were in the camp?" "Yes." "Well there's a Rising Plot Point."

The World Keeper should keep their own notes about each of the Leading Character's arcs, so that they can work to escalate and connect them. The World Keeper should work to tie Arcs from

different characters together so as to create common interest, or opposed interest, about the things going on in the World.

Leading Character Improvement

Leads can upgrade their Leading Characters when the Lead and the World Keeper agree that the actions of the Leading Character in the fiction of the universe justify mechanical improvement of the character, and the Leading Character resolves a related Plot Point. For instance, it could be a character defeating a powerful swordsman they previously lost to.

When Leads decide to upgrade their Leading Characters, here's what they can do:

- Create a new Practice.
- Upgrade a Practice bonus to a max of +3.
- Upgrade a Practice+3 to have a Call On.
- Upgrade a Call On to be a Practice+1.

Getting new items and armor are not considered to be character improvement at all and are left entirely to the in-game fiction of role-playing.

Awarding

You can award Plot Armor to Leading Characters for anything they do that you think is cool or compelling. The more you hand out, the easier the game is, so adjust accordingly.

You can award Call Ons to Leading Characters when you want to highlight an aspect of their character that you find compelling. Do this rarely and only to highlight unusual and special occurrences in play. Leads may turn down your awarded Call Ons, if they do, it's fine. Move on.

Closing And Commentary

In the interest of getting the game codified onto paper, I rushed many sections through the writing process. Especially in the World Book, most sections are presented more haphazardly than desired, and little thought was put into the presentation. I believe that the quality of presentation for material is important in making it easy to understand and play, and apologize for the shortcomings.

Above all, for the World Keeper this game is about assisting the Leads in generating stories about their characters. The World Keeper absolutely should not plan large story arcs or plots. That stuff belongs to the Leads. The job of the World Keeper is to create fictional texture for the Leads to work with in building their stories. The Leads get to choose the direction of their stories, and the World Keeper makes sure they have some good stuff to work with no matter what. Much like the game *Apocalypse World*, you “Play to find out what happens”.

Part of the rule book was directly inspired by discussions from Adam Koebel’s YouTube Channel. In **Running the First Session**, the method of questioning players to quickly build a world of conflict is informed by his advice and practice.

The philosophy of the game overall is informed by *Apocalypse World* and the *Powered By The Apocalypse* community, as well as *The Burning Wheel*. In the case of all these influences, the game borrows some design philosophy and methodology, but does not use the words of the cited games. I do not consider this game *Powered By The Apocalypse*, due to my concern that people who see it advertised as such might expect something that is less of a mechanical departure. I am willing to revisit that opinion if it meets substantial objections.

Character

Plot **Health** **Conditions** **Lead**

Armor

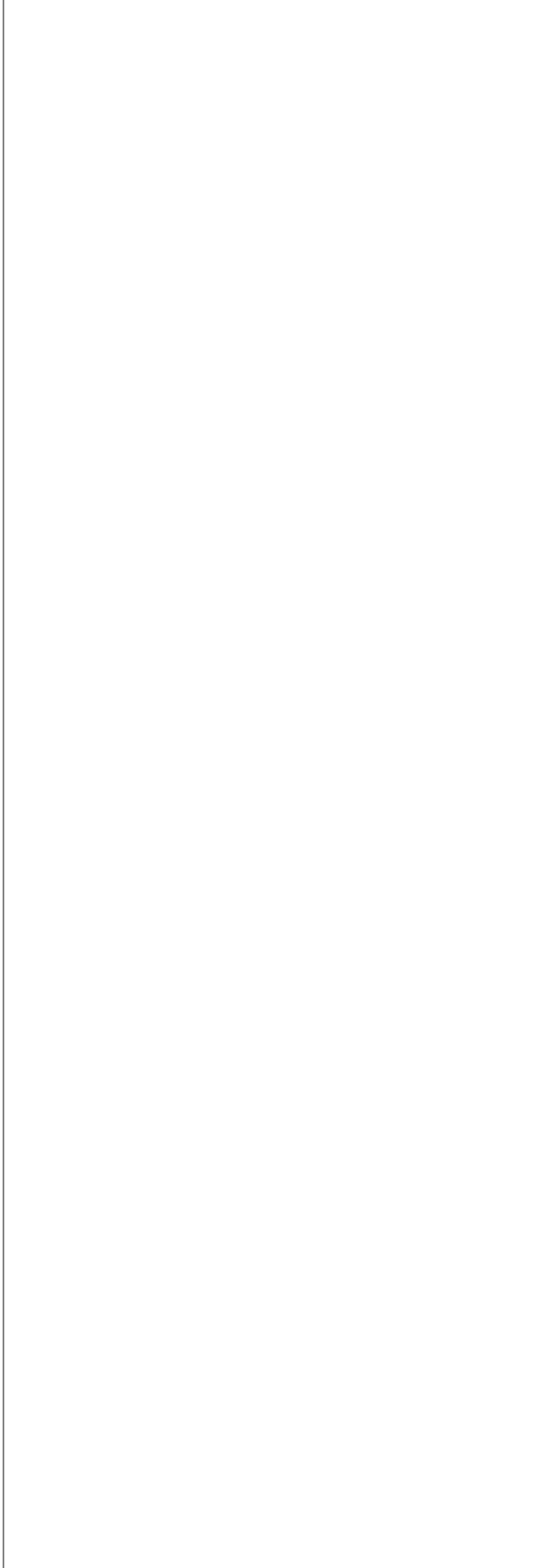
Strength | **Durability** **Marks**
Armor

T A R R
Theatrical Adaptive Role-Playing Rule-Set
Items & Equipment

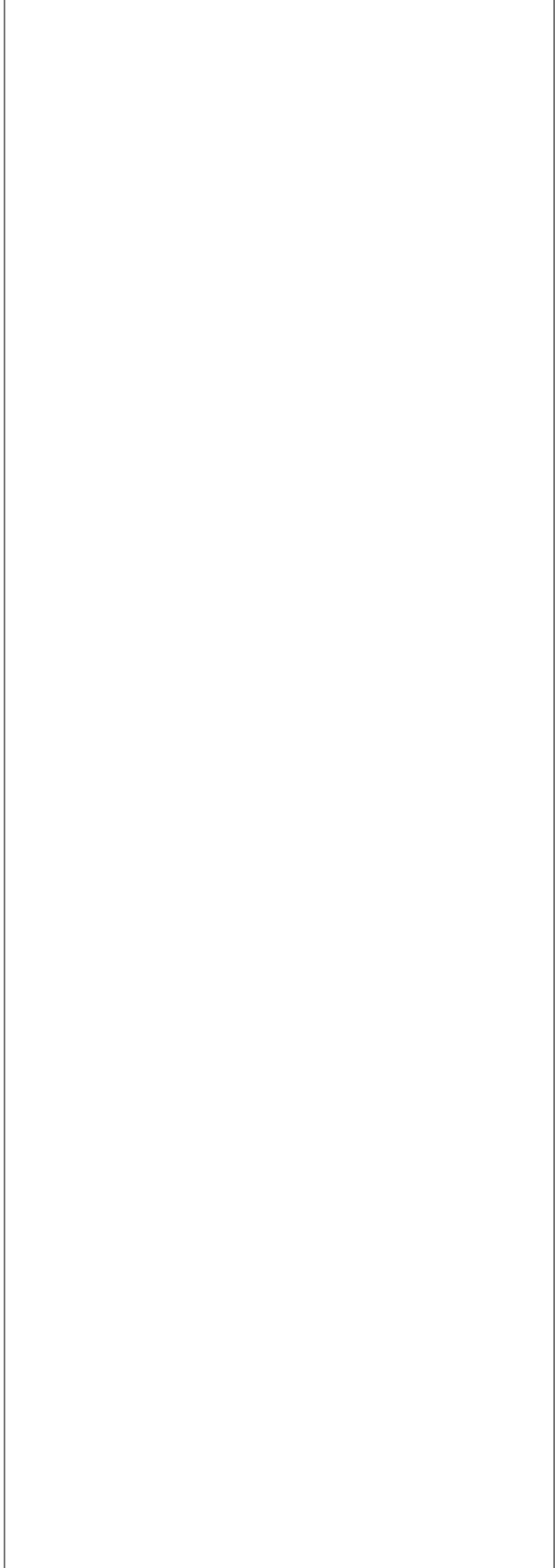
Weapons

Practices

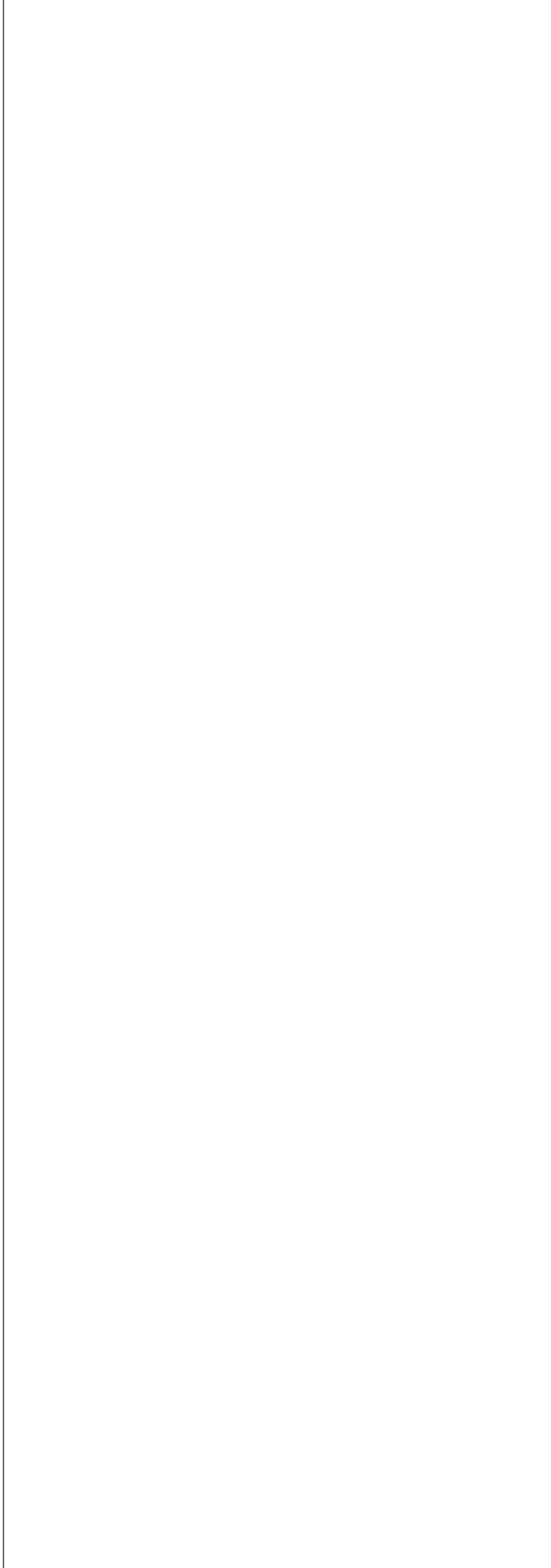
Arc



Arc



Arc



Arc

